



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

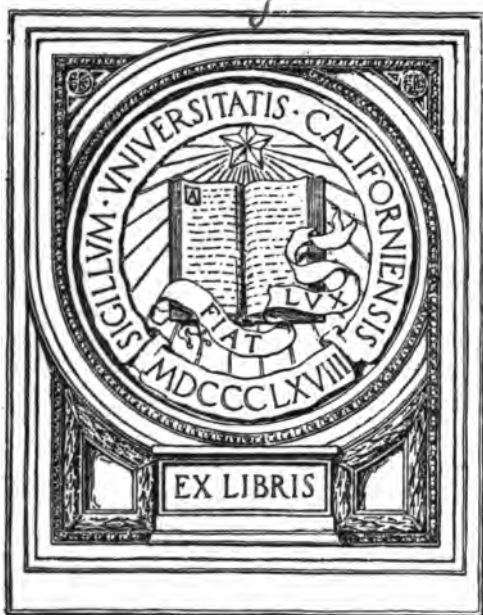
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



952
M821
L



INCENSE & ICONOCLASM

STUDIES IN LITERATURE

BY

CHARLES LEONARD MOORE

THE
UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO PRESS

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1915

COPYRIGHT, 1915
BY
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

THE
KNICKERBOCKER
PRESS

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

THE following papers have all appeared in *The Dial* and thanks are tendered its proprietors for permission to reprint. And as the writing of them was entirely due to the encouragement given to the author by the founder of that journal, he, in slight expression of gratitude, dedicates this book

TO

THE MEMORY OF

FRANCIS FISHER BROWNE

343571



CONTENTS

	PAGE
INCENSE AND ICONOCLASM	I
ON STYLE IN LITERATURE	9
THE SUPERNATURAL IN LITERATURE . .	21
THE SOLIDARITY OF LITERATURE . . .	32
SOME HINDU DRAMAS	41
CELTIC LITERATURE	53
GOETHE—THE OLD VIEW AND THE NEW .	63
THE SPLENDID YEARS OF MODERN LITERATURE	73
OUR PIONEER AMERICAN POET	81
A MASTER OF MAXIMS	90
ARNOLD AND LOWELL	98
THE OLD NEW-ENGLANDERS AND THE REST OF US	106
THE TWO WORLDS	115
THE GREATEST LITERARY FORM	122
ON COMEDY	131

	PAGE
THE NOVEL AND THE PLAY	140
ORIGINALITY IN LITERATURE	151
A STUDY IN PROPORTION	159
POETIC EXPRESSION	168
LITERATURE, MUSIC, AND MORALS . . .	176
THE ROOT IDEAS OF FICTION	184
THE HUNGER-MOTIVE IN FICTION . . .	192
THE LOVE-THEME IN FICTION	202
THE MASTER NOTE IN LITERATURE . . .	212
THE ANALYTIC METHOD	223
ON TEACHING LITERATURE	234
THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF THE ELDER MR. WELLER	242
THE WEATHER IN LITERATURE	249
THE LANDSCAPE PAINTER	258
THE NOMAD IN LITERATURE	266
THE ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND . . .	273
THE CITY-BUILDER	282
CABBAGES AND ROSES	290
THE INTOXICATION OF WORDS	298

Contents

vii

	PAGE
PICTURES AND WORDS	306
THE TRADITIONS AND THE NEW AGE . . .	313
MODERNITY IN LITERATURE AND THE NEXT MOVEMENT	321
THE FIGHT FOR FREE RAW MATERIALS IN LITERATURE	329
THE MAGAZINE GIRL	336



Incense and Iconoclasm

SHOULD criticism burn tapers and swing censers before the masters of literature, or should it take an axe and smash these idols of the past? The modern spirit, the democratic spirit, is impatient of superiorities. It is inconvenient for it to have to worship dead people when it wants to worship its living self. It would like to see an Act of Obliteration passed so that everything which happened before it came upon the scene should be cast away. It feels confidently able to produce out of its own resources all that any reasonable creature needs in the way of literary or artistic work. In some of the South Sea Islands, when a man has reached a certain age he is buried in the ground up to his neck and left to his own devices. A good many modern writers, artists, and musicians would like to apply this method to their predecessors.

There is a certain hardship in each age's struggle to attain expression against the overwhelming mass of expression already in existence. In no other field of human effort does the practitioner have to contend with ghosts. A living general

does not have to array his battalions against Cæsar or Hannibal or Napoleon. A living athlete does not go up against Herakles or Milo. But a book or picture or musical composition has to fight not only against its natural rivals of the present, but against all that has been preserved from the past.

But what is the past? A book that was published or a picture that was painted yesterday, belongs just as much to the past as art works of a thousand years ago. The human spirit is as fluid as air, but it is just as permanent. An idyll of Theocritus, *Aucassin and Nicolette*, a ballad of Tennyson,—what earthly difference is there between these except a trifle more or less of art and perfection. We ought all to be idol worshippers, because we all want our own memories preserved. The man who smashes an idol does so in the hope of having his own statue set up in its place. But what guarantees have we that if we cut off the heads of our present rulers, the next generation will not dig up our bones and cast them into the common pit?

We believe grocers classify four grades of eggs—eggs, fresh eggs, strictly fresh eggs, and new-laid eggs. There is ever more variety of critical intelligence and taste among human beings, ranging from the crude instincts of the natural man, through various grades of educated opinion, up to the inspired appreciator. But as everyone has the inalienable right to judge for himself,—as he can say that he prefers Martin Tupper or Walt Whitman to Shakespeare, or considers Jane Austen a

greater novelist than Scott,—there is bound to be an immense amount of idol-smashing going on all the time. The statues of the true inheritors of the purple line cannot be kept on their pedestals without a vast amount of critical effort.

And revolutions we must have. Every age tries to set its stamp upon its artists. It is only on condition that they paint its portrait that it allows their images to be set up in the Hall of Fame. The portrait painters of a shallow, selfish, and material age will thus be sadly in the way when the inspired delineators of a spiritual and heroic age come along. And the reverse is true. Even the most magnificent outbursts of the art spirit tend in time to become tame and conventional, and a recurrence to a fresher, if shallower, style is necessary.

But in the end the classics emerge. How, it is hard to say, for they usually have to contend with barbarian popularities, they are usually eclipsed in their time by quite secondary figures. Shakespeare was eclipsed by Jonson, by Fletcher, by Daniel. Goethe was eclipsed by Klinger, by Kotzebue, by Schiller, by Jean Paul. But the best are finally triumphant, and the others range themselves in order under them. Then we think iconoclasm is out of place. Criticism, yes! To show how these aristocrats of the intellect and soul differ from one another, to point out in what qualities they are supreme, to show how the secondary figures approach or draw away from them,—all this is gratitude's propitiatory offering,

it is incense of the most refined kind. But to attempt to deal out destruction to them is like the *Ecrasez l'infâme!* of the French *sans culottes*. They, though rising in all the ages, have been tried by a common standard, and they are bound to keep their places.

But what is this common standard? Well, there are hierarchies of art qualities and hierarchies of art forms. Taste runs in cycles: the same essential needs of human nature crop up at intervals and require to be expressed. Each age gives its authors and artists a list of the things it wants done. What one age considers of prime importance may rank low in the opinion of the next; but, taking the whole roll of time, it is not difficult to see what are the prime and what are the secondary qualities of art.

In literature it is first of all necessary that a writer should have something to say and that he should know how to say it. The two things usually go together. Though the great thinkers may be rare, and the great colourists in words almost to be counted on one's fingers, anyone who has an emotion or an idea can usually find language which will be at least adequate. Execution, however, counts for so much in literature that a writer of very inferior intellectual powers who has the instinct for the ordering of perfect words may outrank a greater man.

Creativeness is the next requisite for a great literary artist. Do writers create? We believe so; at least they produce something which did not

exist in the world before. The photographic reproduction of reality is practically impossible, for the dullest and prosiest writer who merely desires to report what he sees has to report it as he sees it, which is differently from anybody else, and quite other than the actual thing. On the other hand, a writer's attempt to juggle with his materials, to use nature and life as masks, to create by the way of allegory and symbolism, results in a secondary kind of art. When an artist has to stand before his picture with a wand and explain that his men and women are not men and women but embodiments of moral qualities, that his tree shadows are emblems of evil and his cloud lights symbols of good, such a work may be interesting and an excellent puzzle-exercise for the intellect, but it is certainly not as good art as a picture which is intelligible at the first glance. It is the same with books. When allegorical or symbolical literature succeeds, it is because readers pay no attention to its recondite meanings, but take it as a straightforward narrative of events.

Power and Beauty divide literature between them. To say that the latter rules alone seems to us as monstrous as to say that there is only one sex in the world. The materials of terror, horror, the grotesque, the ugly, the ludicrous, out of which probably two-thirds of literature are built, have no glimpse of beauty in them; they have immense power, and they thrill our minds as much as beauty can, though in another way. We feel a shock as keenly as we do an attraction.

To come back to the question of incense and iconoclasm,—have not all these art qualities we have enumerated been exercised since the beginning of literature? Has anything new been added in modern or comparatively modern times? It is doubtful. There is a certain glamour of image and expression, which seems to belong to Northern races, which comes out in the Icelandic sagas, the Irish epics, the Welsh bards, and the *Mabinogion*, and whose fullest development is in Shakespeare, Coleridge, and Keats. But there is something so like it in Sappho and Catullus, Theocritus and Virgil, that it is hardly worth while to make the distinction. Probably no French or Italian critic would admit that there is a distinction. Literature has passed through all possible phases of thought and expression again and again.

As with art qualities, so with art forms. They were fixed almost at the start. There were the epic, the drama, the lyric. There were the secondary forms, the idyll, the philosophic poem, the prose narrative, the dialogue, the essay, the epistle. Have we really invented anything new? Shakespeare mingled tragedy and comedy, but so did some of the ancients. Herakles in the *Alcestis* is a comic figure, and some of Aristophanes's plays rise to the region of romance if not of tragedy. Job's comforters are decidedly comic, though perhaps unintentionally so. We have, we think, invented the novel. But there are Greek novels, and the telling of interminable stories probably began with the Cave man. Scheherazade dates

a good way back. We hear a good deal now about *vers libre*. Well, the Greeks had their dithyrambic verse, which was free enough. In English we had Skelton's ragged rhyme, the so-called Pindaric odes, Milton's and Matthew Arnold's irregular blank verse, the long irregular lines of Blake's Prophetic Books, the rhythmical prose of Macpherson's *Ossian*. Much of this is good enough, but none of it is the best. A man may be a good actor although he limps and croaks; but it is hardly worth while to cultivate those disadvantages. The very idea of verse is measure and ordered repetition. If you want to dispense with these things, why not write prose?

A new writer has today what a new writer always had, nature and humanity for his materials, words and tones for his tools. And he has his individual way of looking at or using these things. He may be wise or not to disregard the models of the past; but he may be very sure that he will not give the world anything new, except the touch of his personality, or his special skill with language. Mr. Comyns Carr tells a delicious story in his recent book, which seems to bear on this matter. Lord Randolph Churchill meeting Henry Irving at dinner told him that he had been to see him act Hamlet, but that he had been called away before the conclusion of the play, and would Irving be good enough to tell him how it ended. The latter concealed his surprise and gave a sketch of the last acts. "Good," said Lord Randolph, "I will come and see the whole piece." A few nights

later he met the actor again, and said that he had not only seen him but had bought the book and read *Hamlet* and several other plays by the same author. "And do you know," he said, "I found them extremely interesting." Lord Randolph was a strong personality, but he did not come to much, and perhaps part of the secret of this was his disposition to trust to his own resources. Our new novelists, poets, artists, and musicians who want to see the dead past bury its dead are in a like case. They do not realize that a real work of art is about the most living thing in the world.

ON STYLE IN LITERATURE

EVERYBODY talks about style, and no one knows what it is. Writers who ought to be better informed by experience speak of it as if it were something that could be bought at a shop and wrapped up in brown paper. They talk of its being acquired,—which in any real sense is as impossible as to add a cubit to one's stature. They discuss it as if it were one certain thing—whereas it is a veritable Proteus. Leibnitz's principle of indiscernibility applies to it more than to any other matter. If no two leaves in a forest are alike, far less are the styles of any two writers alike. Every author has some sort of a style, good or bad. And of good style probably the most that can be said is that it is the quality in books which makes and keeps them readable. If a man has a rich nature, a full mind, a knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of his language, the only advice he needs in regard to style is the direction which an old pilot gave for navigating the Amazon: "Keep between the banks, and go ahead."

Style is indeed the product of the whole man. It must show the form of his soul, eagle-winged or

serpent-winding. There will ring in it an echo of all his exultations, agonies, divinations, darings. It must betray the resources of his reason. What logic and lucidity he is possessed of will come out in the clear designs, the ordered architectural arrangement of his work, both in its entirety and in its clauses and sentences. It must exhibit his physical instincts in its sensuous reaching for concrete images, its organization of words into form and colour and music. The reason we associate style with prose rather than with poetry is because verse is a balance of all these qualities. Without inspiration, without ordinance, without the vivid and sounding collocation of words, it falls to the ground and becomes nothing. It cannot sail on one wing or hop on one foot. Poetry is all style; whereas prose usually has one or another of the attributes of style missing or in excess, and our attention is thus arrested, and from its lack of balance we give the thing a name. The two great masters of English verse in the eighteenth century were mighty wielders of words. In the face of the fact that our ordinary speech is shot through with their lines and phrases, it seems senseless as well as ungrateful to deny them the title of poets. But their verse was an invasion of prose. Of style, they employed only that part which belongs peculiarly to prose composition, logical order, lucid statement, wit and wisdom. They abandoned the Orphic utterance; they did not achieve the sensuous realizations of poetry. Wordsworth remounted the tripod of inspiration,

and Keats waved anew the Bacchanalian thyrsus; and since their time there has been no cause to lament the lack of fire or form in style. Rather, if anything, the physical element of style has been too predominant.

It is in connection with words rather than with ideas that most people think of style,—as if words were not merely the symbols of thought. In a moderate number of instances there may be some subtle affinity between the look and sound of words and their meanings. Onomatopœia of course exists. Oftener the affinity is due to associations which words may have acquired. They may bring with them a trail of glory from the past,—or, like good servants, a letter of recommendation from their previous employers. They may be forgotten metaphors, or coins from the treasure-houses of foreign tongues. Sometimes their fitness is due to their noble physiognomy or lordly sound. Mesopotamia thrilled one bosom with sacred awe. Great poets have always known how to use magnificent names with effect. Yet, after all, it must have occurred to many people that the English race at least has rather made a failure of that which is perhaps its chief work—its Dictionary. There is no reason why all our words should not have been created fit and noble,—as the whole Spanish army was once created Hidalgo. As it is, the great mass of our words are low or indifferent,—good enough for bread-and-butter uses, or the purposes of trade, but decidedly lacking in distinction. Aristocratic vocables are as rare as

dukes and princes. It would take a treatise to show this in detail, but I will give a few instances, premising that my own judgment is the only rule of rank which I have used.

The most commonly used names of things—nouns—of our language are rather bad than good. "Ocean" is grandly mouth-filling and pictorial, but "sea" is ignoble, "air" at least questionable, "sky" weak and thin. The clipped dissyllable "heaven" is decidedly poor. "Firmament," however, is magnificent, and "Paradise" fine. "Earth," "sun," "stars," are three low plebeian symbols for the total splendours of the visible world. Turn to the words describing man's own person. His imperial majesty has certainly been modest. "Man" is a pretty poor sound to attach to the prince of creation. "Face!" what a word is that to emblem forth the great soul's apparent seat! "Eyes," "nose," "mouth," "arms," "legs,"—could there be a worse commodity of vile names? Then take the inward attributes of our human state: "Brain" is bad; "soul" only so-so; "heart" indifferent. Truly, as far as words go, man has a poor chance of figuring in any prose writer's golden style. Send him abroad, like Adam, to view and name his possessions! It is to be hoped that Adam had better taste than to call his cave a "house." "Mansion" or "palace" might do. "Garden," "valley," "forest," are good; but "farm," "plain," "tree," "sheep," "road," "horse," "cow," "bird," "bee," and a myriad more are very middling at least. "Metropolis" is

fine, and gave Keats a glittering line,—“Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,” but “city” is affected, and “town”—let us pronounce it “taown” at once and be done with it.

Then take our pronouns, “I,” “he,” “she,” “it,” “who,” “whom,” “you,” “they,”—why, it is like the neighing of horses or the hooting of owls! On the whole, then, we have not made a success of the names we most use. “Birth” is not a pretty word, and “life” and “death” hiss at each other like angry geese. I do not want to fly in the face of my mother language, but as a fellow-sufferer with Mr. Pater and Mr. Alden I ask how I am going to make style out of words like those?

Turn to the verbs. “To be,” “do,” “act,” “make,” “go,” “come,” have a certain brevity of use and command, but they are dull and creeping enough. The fact that we have so often to prefix the sign of the infinitive to our verbs is another offence of the language. It has the look of a presumptuous policeman conveying a squat tramp to the station-house. “To love” has a cooing sound, and “to desire” is noble. But for the most part the verbs denoting the usual occupations of life are vulgar in the extreme. “To buy,” “sell,” “eat,” “fight,” “run,” “talk,” “sleep,” “lose,” “gain,”—these and innumerable others have countenances of no mark or likelihood. Contemplating them, one feels a glow of admiration for Walt Whitman when his picturesque genius soars to the heights of “absquatulate” or “skedaddle.” It is to the adjectives that we must mainly look for what of

physical comeliness our speech affords. Many of them are veritable patricians, and show like Alcibiades or Cosmo de Medici amid the vulgar rabble of our nouns and verbs. "August," "splendid," "noble," "gorgeous," "magnificent," "graceful," "beautiful," "indomitable,"—such words adorn the pages of prose or verse,—

"Pride in each port, defiance in each eye,
I see these lords of human speech pass by."

And here, because I am acting as the Devil's Advocate of words, I would note another fact which tells against my side: "Beauteous is a vile word," says Polonius. It is so! But why? I cannot tell. There must be something in its physiognomy which does not suit our minds.

On the whole, then, owing partly to the enormous proportion of monosyllables, partly to the prevalence of sibilant and dental sounds, the words of the English language are overwhelmingly ugly and unmusical. A word of two or more syllables may be a melody, or at least a cadence; a word of one syllable is merely a noise. The "caw-caw-caw" of the crow or the "tweet-tweet-tweet" of the sparrow are not musical—the trills and arias of the catbird or nightingale are. Words that sing themselves are surely more advantageous to the builder of sentences than words that halt and grunt and groan. The writer of English has to labour with his raw recruits of vocables, to make them stand at attention or walk in file; when he

wants them to give voice together, he finds that they are dumb or hoarse or hissing. All the more honour to him if he succeeds! According to those who find in mere words the secret of style, English literature should be very nearly styleless. But, on the contrary, beyond all other literatures it is drenched and irradiated and alive with style. Even its bad styles—those of Johnson or Carlyle, for example,—are not like the bad styles of other literatures—merely ponderous or commonplace. They are striking, original, full of interest. To sum up, then: the English language is pre-eminently a language of ugly and discordant words; the English literature is pre-eminently a literature of style—of glowing and appropriate expression; therefore words in themselves have very little to do with the evolution of style.

I have said that the idea of style is usually associated with prose; and also that there are as many styles as writers. But prose style in English falls into three great species, to one or the other of which most pieces of composition may be referred. The first of these species is the prose which M. Jourdain was delighted to find that he talked. It is the plain, straightforward, unadorned language of life. But we must beware of thinking that this style, as it exists in the pages of great writers, is without art. There is perhaps as much art in the plainness of Swift, the naturalness of Defoe, the simplicity of Bunyan, as in the ordered and far-wheeling sentences of Milton or Burke. Let anyone try to do a piece of work like Franklin's

autobiography, and he will discover the difficulty of the method. Always the necessary instrument of men of action, and for direct narratives of real experiences, this style has been revived in recent years for the use of fiction, and in fact for many other purposes. Much of Poe's and Stevenson's work was done in it, though at their best they put off corduroy and donned silks and satins and velvets. The style is so simple and wholesome and good that there is little more to be said about it except that self-consciousness is fatal to it; fine writing, unless very skilfully concealed, its ruin.

The second prose species in English is the ornate, elaborated, monumental, periodic style—the so-called prose poetry. De Quincey, defending this his favourite style, somewhere asks what a writer of the calibre of Swift would have done if set such a theme as Belshazzar's feast and told to develop all the implications and consequences of the story. Probably Swift would have made something awful of the matter. But it may be doubted whether the few strong words which the Bible devotes to the incident are not more impressive than any fantasia which Jeremy Taylor or Milton or De Quincey himself could have written around it. Unquestionably, the lofty prose flights of these writers are superb, but there is a touch of falsetto in them. They try to give the sensuous effect of verse without verse's sensuous apparatus of rhythm and rhyme, without its allowed elisions and inversions which tend to concentration and concreteness. And, in the second place, they are an

imitation of the poorest kind of poetry—descriptive poetry. Great poetry does not linger and loiter; it strides on from action to action, from thought to thought, and gives its descriptions very largely by means of hints and flashes and implications. In the set pieces of Ruskin and De Quincey and Jeremy Taylor, we cannot see the forest for the trees. They set out to describe some single matter,—a lark rising in the air, Joan D'Arc on her scaffold, a lonely tower fronting the sea; but the subject bourgeons and effloresces in their hands; troops and battalions of ideas and images come to illustrate or elaborate it. These end by hiding the central theme. By the time we have got to the middle of the description we have forgotten the beginning; and when we are done we do not know whether we are standing on our head or our heels. I do not in the least deny that such work is valuable and wonderful. But it is not quite the real thing either of poetry or prose.

But there is a perfect, crowning, golden style in English prose. It is a style whose colloquial ease is not the home-bred rusticity of our first species, whose sparkling polish is not the impasto brilliancy of our second. It is simple from richness, glowing from within. It is keen and flexible and glittering, like a Damascus blade. It is terse. It does not tire. It does not over-dwell. The supreme master of this prose is Shakespeare; his co-rival in art, though, alas, not in matter, is Congreve. Goldsmith reigns on a little lower level; and there is no fourth to rank with them.

Their prose gives the essence of character in immortal words. We recognize it as our real inheritance of speech, which we all ought to share, but which we have somehow been cut out of. No girl ever said like Rosalind, "A star danced, and under that I was born"; but the phrase gives us at once a picture of the heroine and a precious pearl of language to put away among our verbal treasures. No fine lady ever uttered such a speech as this of Millamant's: "What is a lover that it can give? One makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and when one pleases they die; and then, if one pleases, one makes some more." All the adorable coquetry of the women is in those words, and they are, besides, a set of cadences which affect the literary student with delight and despair. No wandering bear-leader ever put forth a claim to be a gentleman in the words of Tony Lumpkins's boon companion, "Tho' I be obligated to dance a bear, my bear dances only to the genteelest of tunes, 'Water Parted' or the Minuet in Ariadne." The clown rises before us in this sentence, which must tickle the fancy forever.

Sheridan has a sky-rocket imitation of this style. Hazlitt and Charles Lamb, as a reward for their love of it, sometimes attain to its pure perfections. Thackeray struggled all his life to achieve it; but his success is at best quite questionable. Once, in a dispute with Tennyson, he asserted his ability to equal Catullus. He recanted this opinion the next morning, in a note of becoming

modesty; and probably he has by this time recanted the opinion which he held longer and more seriously, that he could write better than Congreve. Strange as it may seem, Dickens is really the more consummate master of this style. In the scenes where the Wellers appear, in those between Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, above all in those which have to do with Sairey Gamp, he too gives us the essence of character in immortal words. Mrs. Gamp's "Put the bottle on the chimleypiece so I may wet my lips with it if I be so disposed"; the Marchioness's pathetic reference to the imagination which was required to season the lemon-peel punch; Sam Weller's philosophy of love-letters; the elder Weller's description of Mr. Stiggins,—these, and a hundred other passages, place Dickens not much below the perfect three.

Cardinal Newman and Matthew Arnold are perhaps the best modern masters of this style in serious matters. And the famous scene where Arminius investigates Mr. Bottle's mind, *quâ* mind, shows in Arnold the creating flash. This species of prose, informal, easy as an old shoe, is, as it were, made for letter-writing; and as a consequence the great English letter-writers, Gray, Cowper, Keats, FitzGerald, are among its best exponents. Keats's prose, indeed, is almost pure Shakespeare. Among Americans, Poe has the glitter though hardly the ease of the style, Lowell its unction, and Emerson its inward irradiation.

There is one kind of prose style which, I think, has hardly been naturalized in English. It is the style of Thucydides and Tacitus—the style, that is, of one who says everything almost without words. Landor essayed to write it; but Junius, perhaps, alone succeeded.

THE SUPERNATURAL IN LITERATURE

OUR benighted eighteenth century ancestors called it *machinery*. They were rationalists and skeptics. Their literature was a literature of social life. Their idea of Nature was the formal terraces and straight avenues of Versailles, the clipped hedges and mazes of Kew or Hampton Court. Mountains to them were horrid haunts of gloom; the ocean, merely the home of sea-sickness. But they were sound on the supernatural. They were myth-makers at heart. Voltaire, who believed in nothing, believed in ghosts for tragedy. Pope invented a graceful apparatus of sylphs for one poem, and a Goddess of Dulness and her court for another. The lyrical poets could not write a stanza without personifying a half-dozen abstract qualities. For poetry deploying all its forces, for the great epic, they thought that an array of contending gods and goddesses was a necessity which no sane person would question. Machinery it was for the most part that they succeeded in creating,—a creaking, soulless work of puppets and pulleys; but their faith in it was a tribute to the highest instincts of mankind. They

22 The Supernatural in Literature

were right. Without the supernatural in some shape, great literature can hardly exist.

Whatever is not touched by the imagination, dies. And the imagination is almost a vassal of the supernatural. Mystery is its home, its haunt, its birthplace. From the beginning of time, the unexplainable facts of life,—generation, growth, decay, death, the process of the seasons, the omnipotence of the sun, the motions of the stars, the strangeness of beast-life,—have exercised the wits of man. His literature is largely a storehouse of guesses, dreams, delusions, in regard to those matters.

The myth-making instinct persists down to our own day. Compelled by the prejudices of readers to cast aside old mythologies, our writers invent new ones out of their own heads. In Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea* the ocean is the sentient, terrible, treacherous antagonist of the man. In *Nôtre Dame* he personifies a cathedral; and *Les Misérables* is filled with sombre and sinister shapes,—the demonology of a great city. Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native* projects a great waste of melancholy moorland as the overruling Providence of the piece. Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* is the story of a supernatural whale, a veritable demon of the deep, which eludes, fights, and finally destroys its maddened hunter and his ship. Poe's whole work is an even more successful attempt than any of these to create, *ab ovo*, the elements of awe and mystery.

But all such individual efforts after the super-

natural are as a sandwich to a seventeen-course banquet compared with the great racial works of mythology and demonology. Looking at the vast population of divinities, spirits, ghosts, and the like, which first and last have been in being, one is thankful that they did not take up space or they would have infallibly crowded humanity off the earth.

The literature of the spirit-world possibly begins with the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The vicinity of the greatest and most mysterious mountains of the world probably accounts for the enormous though vague powers of the Hindu divinities and demons. What accounts for the utter spirit of unreason which animates them and pervades also the actions of the human agents who come in contact with them, I cannot say. The supernatural elsewhere in the world is in some sense natural. There is a logic in its life, a measure in its miracles. But in the Indian poems it is wild, disordered, fluctuating, unforeseen,—a chaotic dream. There are human figures and actions in these poems which are affecting, beautiful, magnificent; but they too are superior to any law. Hermits live a thousand years without food, or standing on one leg, and win thereby virtue which enables them to contend with the supreme deities. The blackest villains are invulnerable to gods. There is a monkey race whose powers transcend those of man. The Pandu brothers, in the *Mahabharata*, are at one moment beggars and suppliants, and the next they are panoplied in might and able to contend single-handed with armies. Possibly

24 The Supernatural in Literature

the Hindu unreasonableness is the truest supernatural.

Persian literature, at least in the *Shah Nameh*, does not greatly extend itself on the side of the supernatural. Sultans and heroes, it is true, live a thousand or fifteen hundred years. There is one king who has a snake growing out of his shoulders which had to be fed with the flesh of virgins. Rustem's seven labours were largely expeditions against demons and powers of darkness. But the Persian imagination did not body forth a mythology with any great vigour. Possibly its great dualistic religion, the most philosophic religion of the world, crushed out minor exhibitions of the divine or the demoniac. The same is true of the Arabs, who, genii, afreets, and magicians, seem rather monotonous personages. Beckford's *Vathek* is really more Eastern than the Eastern tales and poems, in its tremendous energy of invention.

It is a commonplace of criticism, that the Greeks projected only their own pretty and harmonious persons into their Pantheon. Their mythology is a matter of ideals rather than of idols. Yet there was unquestionably a dark shadow to their sunny supernaturalism. One does not usually associate ghosts and the Black Art with their imaginings, yet Apuleius is full of rather gruesome witchcraft. There is a play of Plautus imitated probably from Menander, which has to do with a haunted house. Goethe's *Bride of Corinth* is the version of a Greek legend.

The best part of the Roman mythology, and the most fruitful for literature, was its humble rustic divinities—Faunus, Sylvanus, Priapus, the Lars and Lemures. The Latin Pantheon was filled with didactic deities who weighed upon poetry like lead. And later, during the Empire, when the great Eastern gods—the Magna Mater, the mysterious Mithra, Isis, Serapis, and the dog-faced Anabis, entered Rome, in turn, in triumph like an Emperor, they had little inspiration for literature. Possibly the rising power of Christianity strangled their influence.

For nearly two thousand years, Christianity, with its enormous mythology of spiritual and demoniac powers, its angelology, its hierarchies of saints and martyrs, its miracles and its remissions of sins, has filled the civilized world and satisfied man's sense of awe and worship. It has touched all acts with a wand of life, and caused them to blossom in prodigious efflorescence. The poems of Dante, Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser, and Milton, the Arthurian legends which it remodelled after its own image, the plays of Calderon and Shakespeare and Goethe and a myriad minor works, testify to its power. No other spiritual influence has had a tithe of its appraisable effect. The Scandinavian mythology is a good rival of the Greek and Hindoo ones. The clear and beautiful Greek divinities would perhaps have scorned the one-eyed Wotan or the blacksmith-like Thor, but in a contest for sublimity those last would have it all their own way.

26 The Supernatural in Literature

Celtic imagination is supposed to have influenced or moulded the Icelandic sagas, but the Celtic gods are very indifferent and unimpressive personages compared with those of the farther North. The Celtic supernatural comes out best as a kind of a glamour cast over Nature. It suffuses the visible world with magic, but hardly concentrates into figures of commanding power. We know practically nothing about the Druidic cult, but it looms large as a thing of awe and mystery. Scotland, down to modern times, is a land of bogles, witches, warlocks, and worrie-cows. Scott and Burns came into a great inheritance of the supernatural, which they bettered and enlarged. It is hardly realized how much Scott was dominated by the mystery and magic of the spirit world. No English author save Shakespeare has so felt its power. He was accused of having a Meg Merrilies in every one of his books, after that impressive figure was first created. But his early poems show the trend of his imagination quite as distinctly.

In the wake of the conquering hosts of Christian mythology, many superstitions sprang up throughout Europe,—survivors of the first or original denizens of wood and field. Venus, driven from Olympus, retired into the Venusberg—the Siren became the Lorelei. Of phantom things that seem to have originated in the Middle Ages, the Vampire and the Were-wolf were perhaps the most horrible. The French beast epics and *fabliaux* hardly come into the province of the supernatural,

but they show man's instincts stirred by the strangeness of animal life—its likeness to, yet removedness from, his own.

Calderon has a figure in one of his plays called *El Embozado*, which has been the ancestor of a long and distinguished line in literature. In the original legend which Calderon used, a man is pursued wherever he goes by pieces of paper falling from the skies, on each of which he finds inscribed his own name. The hero of the play is haunted by a masked and cloaked figure which appears to him at all times and places. At last he turns upon it with his sword,—they fight, and the intruder falls to the ground. He removes the mask from its face, and beholds—himself. There is a similar idea in a ballad of Gongora. A man is on his way to an assignation with a nun. He meets a funeral cortège, and is inexplicably drawn to follow it. The train enters a lighted church; the coffin is placed before the altar, and mass is performed. Then the company silently files out, and the man advances and looks upon the face in the coffin. It is his own. Of course this idea is the germ of such modern stories as Poe's *William Wilson* and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

The personages of Shakespeare's fairy comedy, Oberon, Titania, and Puck, had a long pedigree in the legends of the people. Robin Goodfellow, indeed, is the most characteristic English sprite. Queen Mab is supposed to be a reincarnation of Queen Méve of the great Irish epic cycle, though she must have changed marvellously in the course

28 The Supernatural in Literature

of centuries. The Witches of Lancashire were famous before Ainsworth wrote of them.

The powers which mortals acquired by contact or contract with divinities or demons were very various. Faust received back his youth. The Scotch nobleman in the *Legend of Montrose* and the Bard in Campbell's *Lochiel*, were experts at second-sight. The heroine of Rossetti's *Rose Mary* saw her lover's fate reflected in the Beryl Stone; the heroine of another of his ballads had the pleasant gift of making a man waste away as his wax image melted before a fire. Any friend of Asmodeus could have the roofs of houses lifted for him. Levitation, however, was the great gift of demonology. The most prominent fact about witches was that they rode on broomsticks. One can shut one's eyes and see the air of Europe blackened with these beings, all making their way to the Hartz mountain. As Goethe sings,

"The farther northward one doth go,
The plentier soot and witches grow."

I have sketched but an incomplete outline of this great subject. Volumes would be required to do justice to ghosts alone; and the doings and disguises of the Fiend himself would fill a library. What I have wished to show is the importance of the supernatural for literature. Perhaps we are better without it in life. I for one have no wish to revive compacts with the Devil, or the burning of witches. But we can hardly have books that

The Supernatural in Literature 29

thrill and enthrall, without some use of the things of the spirit world.

There has always been something in the air of America as fatal to superstition as the soil of Iceland is to snakes. After Ponce de Leon's quest, and the witch-fires of New England, there is hardly a gleam of the supernatural in our history. De Soto's march to the Mississippi in search of gold is emblematic of our progress. Nothing, indeed, is more remarkable than the spectacle of a great people crushing its way over a continent, coming in contact with new scenes and strange experiences, yet evincing no excitement over the unknown, holding steadily to the practical and to the main chance. That is the reason why our national heroes are so impossible for poetry,—why our national literature is so thin. Daniel Boone would be as good a legendary hero as Siegfried, if his Ohio woods had harboured wormlike dragons, if gnomes had been his companions and water-sprites his guardians,—if, in short, he had been brought into some relation to the supernatural. Washington would be as good a central figure for a drama as Wallenstein, if like Wallenstein he had travelled with a train of astrologers and magicians. The Indians whom we have dispossessed were a more imaginative race than ourselves, and a large part of such elevation and grandeur as does inhere in our literature is due to them. Our classic writers, indeed, were keenly alive to the value of the supernatural, and seized every possibility in our life that would give them a

30 The Supernatural in Literature

background of darkness, an air of mystery. Their successors have been in the main parochial and provincial. Their attitude toward the great ideas of the world reminds me of a story of a young woman of my neighbourhood. Being asked to accompany some friends to Europe, she answered, hesitatingly, that she would like to go to Europe, she had heard a great deal of Europe, but she did hate to miss the Mt. Holly fair.

But let us not give up hope. Americans are not really different from other people. They must thrill with hopes and fears for the future, they must consult the oracles of life and death. Under the shadow of our noble but rather prosaic Protestant religion, an undergrowth of superstitions is springing up. Pretty urban or rural customs, which have their root in Pagan observances, are being revived. The Priestess of the Black Hills reads the stars for more folk than we imagine. Chiromancy, hypnotism, and mind-reading flourish. We have no witches who can alter the boundaries of our properties in a night, but our Wizards of Finance seem to have inherited their gifts. Charlatans of both sexes claim miraculous powers of healing and receive amazing credence. A young woman died in Philadelphia not long ago who gave out that she was the bride of Christ. Her followers believed in her to the extent of giving her a brick house. I have no desire to suggest that these things are good in themselves. But man must have some outlet into the unknown. We cannot live by bread alone, nor subsist on a mental diet

The Supernatural in Literature 31

of stock reports, eulogies of the world's work, and speeches of strenuous politicians. Any change which will deepen our emotions and widen our intellects, must be for the better. And if such a change sets in, the literature which deals nobly with the supernatural must come into its own.

THE SOLIDARITY OF LITERATURE

IF a stranger to our planet, unacquainted with its natural laws, were to go down to the margin of the sea, at the lowest ebb of the tide, he would find the ocean stretching motionless before him, apparently fixed within set bounds. But presently little tongues of wave would begin to run up unto his feet; if he stood still they would encircle him and cut him off from dry land; then the billows would come rolling in, each higher than the last; he would look about him in despair; it would seem to him that that quiet thing, the sea, had become alive, and was preparing to swallow the earth and the monuments thereof. But our stranger need only to wait; the earth would still lift its head above the waters; little by little these would recede, and everything would be as it was before.

The movements and momentary fads of literature are much like the tides. They are necessary to keep the ocean of life from stagnating, the world of humanity alive; but they are recurrent, periodical, and do not change anything very much.

The banners under which artists and writers fight—the watchwords, shibboleths, party cries which they go forward sounding,—are fine things

to inspire them, to keep them together, to nerve them for the struggle. Men are always more willing to go out and be killed if they are dressed up in uniform and have a standard advancing before them. And the waving of flags, the flourishing of trumpets, the agitations of battle, are good to impress and draw the attention of the public. Mankind would probably sit down content with its old art, if every now and then someone did not start up to tell it that the work of the past was faded and false and foolish, and that he had a recipe for a new literature, a new music, a new painting, which would rejuvenate the world. And, being curious, mankind very often does trade the old lamps for the new ones and gives away a talisman which can command the genii for a tin vessel.

There are, and always have been, two great armies encamped over against each other in literature—the idealists and the realists: those who paint man as he is, and those who paint him as he should be; those who draw from the idea, and those who copy from experience. All the skirmishes, forays, onsets, retreats, and changing fortunes of literature are part of this great war. Yet the combatants are always changing sides or setting up separate standards of their own, and in the last analysis there is so little difference between them that the mellay seems to be carried on for fun rather than for principle.

In one of the first and finest pieces of literary criticism we have, *The Frogs* of Aristophanes,

the struggle I have indicated is shown as on in full force. The great comic poet adored Æschylus, respected Sophocles, and detested Euripides as a newcomer and a leveller. Undoubtedly there are differences in the poetic gifts of the three men—between the heroic sublimity of Æschylus, the serene steady art of Sophocles, and the sentimental and pathetic naturalness of Euripides. But they all painted life, they all projected wonderful and remarkable figures, and the work of one could very easily be mistaken for that of another. Æschylus might have been proud to claim the *Bacchanals*, and Euripides might easily have signed the *Philoctetes*. Today all their pieces are alike classic and supposed to be separated by a wide gulf of demarcation from modern work. I say supposed; for the Greek plays have the one and only quality which really counts in literature—vitality. Even as stage plays, given a fair chance, they could probably hold their own against anything new.

The terms “classic” and “romantic” came into use in Germany perhaps a hundred and fifty years ago as the shibboleths of two opposing factions. Classic was supposed to indicate a view of life, an attitude of mind, sane, noble, healthy; romantic, a diseased and morbid condition of thought which drove one to deal in horrors of any kind—death-heads, charnel vaults, religious mania, sexual aberrations, the supernatural. Goethe, by precept and example, pointing to Greek literature, enforced this distinction. I confess I am unable to

see anything eminently sane and wholesome in the horrible stories of Agamemnon or Œdipus, in the murderous frenzies of Achilles. And the supernatural in the *Odyssey*, the *Persians*, the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, is very much like the supernatural in the *Divine Comedy*, *Hamlet*, or the folklore stories. It must be remembered that we have very little of Greek literature. If we could browse through the Alexandrian library we could probably find a parallel and analogue for every modern book or mode of thought.

After the classicists and romanticists had fought out their fight, the realists came upon the scene and buried their predecessors, dead and living alike,—and, indeed, buried the whole past, as savouring of decay. Nothing was worth while except brand-new documents of life. Everything had to be painted or photographed from the model; and as the easiest models to come at were of the low or middle classes, literature sank at once to the mediocre in intelligence and form. Prose superseded verse; the novel, the drama. The return to nature which was preached meant a descent to the commonplace. Writers went about by the score with their note-books open to take down the most meaningless chatter or to mark the most insignificant acts of mankind. Any old bore of a farmer or sailor or fisherman could become the hero; any empty-headed, goose-necked girl the heroine of a book. But as the poorest writer in the world inevitably craves for something strong in character or plot or situation, realism broke into two

36 The Solidarity of Literature

branches—one, naturalism, dealing with the horrible details of poverty and vice, and finally setting up a school of its own, the decadents, who glorified these things; and the other, satire, which healthfully reacted upon its material with humour—poured salt in the wounds of life to heal them. It is hardly necessary to say that none of the doctrines of realism were new—none of its works without previous example. The new comedy of Athens must have precisely anticipated, and in a more brilliant fashion, all that our realists have done. The young poet who was advised to study the people, and replied that he had just bought a copy of Terence and Plautus, was not so far wrong. Lucian and Petronius could give points to Zola or Maupassant. Indeed, there is a Hindu play—*The Little Clay Cart* of King Shudraka—which, sixteen hundred years old, is fresher and truer in its realistic painting of life than almost any modern play or novel. And, strange to say, from this primitive Asiatic comedy emerge two of Shakespeare's most wonderful figures, Cloten and Imogen.

The latest organized movement in literature seems to be that of Symbolism. Symbolism, I suppose, is largely the thing that used to be called allegory—and allegory is as old as the world. Whole epochs have been dominated by it—as, for example, the thirteenth century, when the two authors of the *Roman de la Rose* produced a pivotal work which influenced Dante on the one hand and Spenser on the other. Mankind has about made

up its mind, however, that these poets are great in spite of, rather than because of, their allegory. As Hazlitt said, "if you let the allegory in their works alone it won't bite you." Literature finally threw off the symbolical and produced Shakespeare with his direct rendering of life. Whatever we may think of the allegorical, the symbolical, the mystical qualities in literature, it is certain that they are nothing new, and it is doubtful whether they can again do anything which will equal their elaborate exercise in the past.

Form in literature, no less than matter, has its street-cries to attract buyers. Style is lauded as though it were something separable from thought or art. Euphuism and preciosity have their day. Such tags of criticism as "the inevitable phrase," "the *juste mot*," "distinction," "*nuance*," and a dozen more, all perfectly proper in their proper places, are worked to death, forced into an importance they do not possess. People make a creed out of a claw of Jove's eagle. Some authors go about proclaiming that prose is a finer form of expression than verse. Others are wildly sure that the overloaded and intricate prose of De Quincey or Pater is our final and perfected speech, the large utterance of our future gods. Others are all for the unconventional, for the verse run mad of Blake or Whitman. None of these methods or mannerisms of expression are original—are discoveries of those who preach them. All of them have been tried again and again in the progress of literature.

What are the new-old ideas that are floating in

38 The Solidarity of Literature

our air and fated to influence literary creation? One is the idea of the new power of women. We talk as if the woman spirit had been confined, like the genie in the brass bottle, for all past ages, and was now released, and, towering above man who had delivered it, was threatening to destroy him. The fable of woman's imprisonment in the past will hardly bear examination. In all times she has had greater leisure, and probably a greater average cultivation in the pleasing arts, than man. And a long line of poets, prophets, leaders from Deborah and Sappho and Hypatia down, star the annals of every race and every age in proportion probably as numerous as today. Taking woman's work as a whole, I do not see that it has added any distinct or special quality to literature or art.

Another large and vague idea trying to impose itself on literature is that of democracy. What is democracy? I am inclined to think there is no such thing. I catch myself writing of middle and lower classes,—which is silly in an American, for we are all of the middle or lower classes. Where there is no rank fixed by law or custom there can be no upper class. Such transitory things as wealth or power will not make one. But there may be superiors and inferiors, and our whole social system is based upon superiority and inferiority. Go where you will, you will find people ordering and people obeying—people looked up to and people looked down upon. Every little hamlet, unmarked upon the map, has its king and his circle of courtiers. If democracy merely means

the free opportunity to rise or fall, then perhaps we have realized it in America. But this halcyon state is not likely to hold. We have evolved tremendous powers which, unless human nature has changed from of old, will sooner or later try to perpetuate themselves.

Optimism is a habit of mind rather than an idea. I do not know whether Americans have more hope and sunny expectations than other races, but we talk and preach them more. I think this rose-coloured outlook, whatever effect it may have on life itself, is detrimental to literature. It banishes tragedy and all great and serious thought. It makes our art of all kinds thin and flat and savourless. How are we going to make bricks without straw?—how produce great effects without great means?—how project rounded figures without shadow? Our optimism and lack of depth are largely due to our material success, and to the fact that we have never known, as a nation, defeat, despair, and crushing grief. In a literary way, it has been taught us by Emerson. The New England prophet is a delightful "friend of the spirit," but the attempt to build either great lives or great books out of his preachments would be like carrying out smoke in a hand-basket.

Is there, then, ever anything new in literature? or do the same old waves rise and recede as the moon guides its retinue around the earth? There is this: the individual spirit and gift of each new writer. In Goethe's *Italian Journey* he describes how he was once taken at night, with a party of

artists, to the Vatican, to see the statues by torch-light. He describes the wonderful effects of the flashing torches upon the marble figures—altering, contorting, making them alive. The great statues of humanity, the circling background of nature, always exist the same. But each one of us has a uniquely burning, differently coloured torch, which we flash upon these permanent forms. As we choose, we can concentrate its light upon some noble head with serene brow and solemn eyes; or we can direct it upon the labouring limbs, or animal portions of the figure. We can let one statue stand out, while all the rest are swathed in darkness; or we can move our light rapidly about and set the whole company in confused motion. We can reveal the central group of humanity, or we can illuminate the background of nature.

SOME HINDU DRAMAS

INDIA had what may properly be called a romantic drama before any European nation. The Greek and Latin plays dealt, of course, with nature and humanity; and all that concerns man and the world may be found in them, in germ at least. But they turned away by choice from some aspects of our common life. In tragedy, they held to high and stern themes; in comedy, they dwelt on low and base ones,—and they did not mix the two. The notes of the modern Romantic drama are, perhaps, chiefly these: the immense development of Love—the love of man and maid—as the central feature of the plot; the increased use of natural scenery and phenomena toned in sympathy with the action or moods of the actors; the admixture of tragedy and comedy throughout each work—the ideal and the real walking arm in arm, as it were; and, finally, a loose, rambling texture of plot, defiant of the unities of time and place. These notes, signs alike of the work of Shakespeare, of Calderon, and of Goethe, are all exactly anticipated in the Hindu plays whose date may be anywhere from the beginning of our era to the year eight or nine hundred.

The rise of the Hindu drama seems to reverse

the usual progress of an art form in any literature. As a rule, the sublime, the tragic, the irregular master comes first; then the more perfect and moderate artist, and last of all the realist and comedian. But here the Menander-like author of *The Little Clay Cart* is the earliest; and following him comes Kalidasa, the maker of beautiful visions, soft, gentle, artistic; while at the end, after the lapse of centuries, rises the great and appalling tragedian Bhavabhuti, the Hindu Æschylus.

If King Shudraka was the real as well as the reputed author of *The Little Clay Cart*, he must have had a liking for low life which would class him with the Sultan of *The Arabian Nights*. Courtesans, gamblers, thieves, cowherds, officers of the guard, and executioners move across the scene. In variety and vigour of portrayal, in sheer vividness as of life itself, the play has no rival in ancient literature, and is not surpassed by the best of its kind in Shakespeare or Goethe or Burns. There is the gambler Samvahaka, who is pursued by two keepers of a gambling-house to whom he owes money, and who is rescued by another gambler. There is the thief Savilaka, who breaks into a house with a display of all the rules of his art and the procedures of logic. There are the officers of the guard, who quarrel with each other while they let Aryaka, the cowherd who is destined to be King, escape. All are depicted with the startling effect of truth which comes from the proper use of the exaggerations of art.

To modern taste, the blot upon the piece is the

profession of Vasantasena. She is a courtesan who has acquired an immense fortune, but has conceived a pure love for Charudatta, an unfortunate Brahman. Generally Hindu literature is as careful of the purity of its heroines as is English literature at its best. The woman with a past, and the theme of three, have no place in their poetry. But there are two remarkable exceptions—Draupadi, the heroine of the *Mahabharata*, who is married to the five Pandu brothers; and Vasantasena. In the case of the latter, though there is some pretty plain language addressed to her, and though her wealth and the sources of it are plainly indicated, we can shut our eyes to her bad repute. She is so beautiful, so gentle, so generous, and so devoted, and she passes through such an ordeal to win her love, that in the end she rises in our minds a sister to Imogen herself.

The play, indeed, has a haunting resemblance to *Cymbeline* in incident and character. The great figure of the piece—Samsthanaka, the King's brother-in-law, who persecutes Vasantasena with his love and tries to do her to death—is Cloten in a previous incarnation. There is not a mere family resemblance, as between many figures of fiction, but the characters are identical. If anything, the sweep and power of the creation is greater in the Hindu play. Vain, boastful, ignorant, cruel, cowardly, horrible, and deadly, Samsthanaka is a supreme triumph of dramatic projection, flawless from the first word he utters to the last.

The deep feeling for natural scenery which char-

acterizes Hindu poetry beyond all the utterances of the Romantic Muse, comes out in this play in two scenes, one of which describes a great storm of the rainy season, which sends Vasantasena into Charudatta's garden; the other exhibits a public park where Vasantasena is apparently done away with. In both cases the scenery is by way of contrast to the action,—the dark approach and tumultuous dashing of the tropic rain driving the lovers into each other's arms, and the grim murder of the girl being set against the smiling beauty of the garden. Another very famous scene of the play shows Matreya, Charudatta's friend, led through the eight courts of Vasantasena's palace. The scene is undramatic, but the glittering words in which the riches of the house are described add to the vividness and lifelikeness of the whole play. In general, the conduct of the scenes, though often impossible to our ideas of theatrical effect, is essentially dramatic. The interest is sustained and the suspense kept up to the final word. The unravelment in the last act is better handled than in most of Shakespeare's comedies or romances. To sum up, the author of *The Little Clay Cart* was surpassed in verbal poetry, philosophy, and tragic situations, by Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti; but as a creator of character he is unrivalled in the Hindu drama, and can lean across the centuries and shake hands with Shakespeare and Goethe.

It was the luck of Kalidasa to be the first revealed of all the Hindu poets to the Western world. The charm and perfection of *Sakuntala* got him

the title of "the Hindu Shakespeare." To my mind, Shelley would be a closer comparison. Both are poets of ærial distances, of clouds, sunsets, forests, groves, caves. Their human beings are the embodiments of these things, and can hardly be separated from the natural phenomena amid which they move. A celestial ichor, rather than human blood, runs in the veins of Kalidasa's personages. These are gods, nymphs, heroes, hermits, and the like. They are dazzling, beautiful, tender, but homely human nature seems to have little part in them. They are all one family with the mountain heights, the clouds, groves, flowers, and animals, with which they have their home. The result is a debauch of beauty, an intoxication of the senses of vision, hearing, smell, but a woeful lack of heart-gripping, mind-thrilling passion. Even the tragic situations lose force because of their unreality or extra mundane quality. When Dushyanta rejects Sakuntala, it is most like the separation of two clouds which the winds have driven apart. When the King takes arms at the command of Indra against the Demons, we do not believe in his warlike prowess,—for how could Demons exist in such a soft and unnerved world?

Yet *Sakuntala* is the loveliest flower of the Hindu drama. The play opens in a bold and striking way. Dushyanta, an Indian King, is hunting in the lower slopes of the Himalayas, and, following a deer, has entered the precincts of a sacred grove. He sees Sakuntala, the daughter of the hermitage, and falls in love with her. The

ensuing scenes of the wooing are not wanting in humour, but their chief characteristics are the delicacies, the reserves, the mutual shyness, of the lovers. Love is never conceived by these southern poets as a bold flame, o'erleaping bounds and sweeping everything before it. Finally, the King and Sakuntala come to an understanding; and in the absence of her guardian, the sage Kanva, they are married by the Gandharva rite. But the King has to return to his kingdom, and he departs leaving with Sakuntala a ring. Kanva arrives and approves the marriage; but, unfortunately, Sakuntala has incurred the wrath of an irascible hermit who curses her and declares that her husband shall forget her. He relents so far as to allow that upon the sight of the ring of recognition remembrance shall return to Dushyanta. The greatly admired fourth act shows the departure of Sakuntala from the hermitage. It is indeed a most tender and touching picture of girlhood breaking the ties that bind it to the only home which it has known. It is the most universal thing, in Kalidasa. Sakuntala goes from tree to tree, from flower to flower, and bids them farewell; and she showers pet names and caresses upon the fawn she has raised, and the girl comrades who have grown up with her. The scene changes to Dushyanta's palace. He is restless and melancholy, stricken with forgetfulness of the past, yet conscious that there has been a past. Sakuntala appears; but, unfortunately, she has lost the ring of recognition, and the King refuses to receive her as

his wife. She is carried off into the air. Then the ring is recovered by a fisherman who finds it in a fish he has caught. It is brought to the King, who recovers his memory and is plunged into grief. He is called away to lead the armies of Indra; and finally, in the heaven of Kasyapa, he meets his son by Sakuntala, and is reconciled to his wife. There is not much strength or variety of characterization in the play. The hermits are fairly well discriminated, and there is one scene of low life between two constables and the fisherman which lends some relief to the poetry and phantasy of the work.

Vikrami and *Urvashi*, Kalidasa's other admitted play, is a slighter work than *Sakuntala*, but, if anything, is even more ethereally beautiful. Again the piece opens magnificently. The scene is upon a peak of the Himalayas. A bevy of Apsaras, Sky-nymphs, are grouped there, when Keshin, one of the Demons, descends upon them and carries off Urvashi. Pururavas, an earthly king, enters, pursues the Demon, brings the nymph back, and falls in love with her. The scene changes to the garden of Pururavas. His friend, the buffoon of the piece, betrays to the Queen the secret of the King's love. Urvashi enters unseen. She writes a letter on a leaf to Pururavas, and listens to his love raptures. He loses the letter, and it falls into the hands of the Queen, who confronts him with it and refuses him forgiveness. Urvashi falls under a curse and loses her divine knowledge. Then there is a beautiful evening scene in the garden, when the Queen relents and gives the King permission to

possess the nymph. The great act, however, is again the fourth. The lovers have retired from the city into the mountains. Urvashi unknowingly profanes a tabooed grove, and is changed into a vine. Pururavas wanders everywhere searching for her. As, in the former play, Sakuntala's farewell to the trees and flowers amid which she has grown up is the deepest note struck, so here Pururavas' appeal to all the animals in turn to aid him in finding Urvashi is the strongest part of the play. At last he finds a ruby of transformation which changes the nymph back into her own shape. In the remainder of the play other complications ensue which form almost a new action.

There is not enough opposition or resistance in Kalidasa's plays to make the dramatic fibre tense and strong. There is no shadow—at most, only a white mist. As a consequence, the figures are not firm and definite; they have not the body and movement of life. They are delicate, floating, aërial visions, infused with the sweetness and tenderness of ideal sentiment.

In Bhavabhuti, we descend unto the earth and move among human beings like ourselves. We descend further into gulfs and glooms that would have appalled Kalidasa's soul. *Malati and Madhava* has been called the Eastern *Romeo and Juliet*—not so much from the characters of the lovers, who, like all Hindu creations of that kind, are shy and timid in the extreme, given to the most roundabout declaration of their passion and to pining away on the slightest provocation, but because of some of

the incidents which recall the English play. The plot relates the fortunes of two young persons in the ordinary rank of life whom Kamandaki, a seeress, schemes to join together. Malati is carried off by a priest and priestess of the dread goddess Durga, as a sacrifice. The scene of culminating horror is a field of dead bodies before the temple at Durga. Madhava enters with a drawn sword and a lump of human flesh, to propitiate the deity of the place. Within the temple, Malati, dressed as a sacrifice, is about to be offered up a victim by the priest and priestess. Madhava enters, rescues Malati, fights with the priest and kills him. The priestess flies off, screaming vengeance. In greatness of conception and gloomy power of execution the scene is not unworthy of comparison with that of Juliet awakening in the tomb. The last act of the play is a fit companion of the one described. Malati has been carried off again, and Madhava and his friend wander in search of her amid the peaks and gulfs of the Vindhyan mountains. They are faint with hunger, and worn out with woe; and after long utterances of hopeless grief, Madhava is about to jump into an abyss, when Kamandaki appears with the garland he had given Malati and the news that she is alive. There is a lively and natural sub-plot of another pair of lovers. The piece ends happily—as do all Hindu plays.

The *Latter Acts of Rama*, Bhavabhuti's other play, is a sequel to the great Hindu epic *The Ramayana*. Sita, the lovely heroine of that poem, after the overthrow of Ravana, her abductor, goes

through the ordeal of fire to satisfy her husband's subjects as to her chastity. But this is not enough; and when they revolt again, Rama cold-bloodedly puts her from him and orders her to be exposed in the Dandaka forest. Twelve years later, filled with remorse, he visits the forests and there encounters his two sons to whom Sita gave birth in the early days of her exile. The situation and the characters of the two boys remind one of the sons of Cymbeline. The play is perhaps more remarkable for scenic splendour than for tragic depth. In the first act, Rama's brother exhibits to him a series of great wall-paintings depicting the main incidents of *The Ramayana*. Lava, Rama's son, makes war upon his father's guards in a scene which must have taken a great deal of staging to produce. And in the last act, Rama's family and subjects are assembled in a great amphitheatre on the banks of the Ganges, and Valmiki, the poet of the *Ramayana* exhibits a play representing the sufferings of the exposed Sita. The gods descend and declare her purity, and restore her to her husband.

Ratnavali the Necklace, is a charmingly told story of court intrigue. The heroine is a young princess who is found on a piece of wreck at sea, with a diamond necklace upon her. The ornament indicating high birth, she is placed by her preserver as an attendant upon the Queen Vasavadatta, who, unknown to either, is her cousin. Sagarika falls in love with the King, like Louise de la Vallière. Her affection is betrayed by a pet

starling, who repeats to the King a conversation between Sagarika and a friend. The usual consequences follow. In the end, Sagarika's relationship and royal birth are discovered, and the Queen accepts her as her husband's second wife. A very startling and effective theatre spectacle occurs in the last act. The King and Queen with their attendants are assembled in the garden. A conjurer is present, and he makes it appear that the palace, where Sagarika is imprisoned, is in flames. The King rushes into the fire to rescue her. The conjurer reverses the spell, the palace stands as before, and Sagarika and the King descend to meet the others.

Mudra-Rakshasa; or, The Signet of the Minister, is a political play without any love interest whatever. It relates the plots and counterplots of Chanakya, the Minister of Chandragupta, and Rakshasa, the adviser of Malayaketu,—Chandragupta being the usurper and his rival the representative of the murdered race of Nanda, the legitimate King. The whole piece has for its purpose the reconciliation of Rakshasa with the reigning monarch; and this is brought about by the deep devices of Chanakya, who outwits his rival at every point, turns all his plots against himself, and gradually dissolves the partnership between Rakshasa and the prince whose cause he has espoused. There is little difference in morality between the two diplomats, though as Rakshasa has followed with allegiance a fallen lord he may perhaps be deemed the nobler character. But Chanakya is by far the greater man,

and there is hardly any figure in Shakespeare's political plays which makes a greater impression on one of intellectual power and subtlety. There is a remarkable scene which out-Machiavels Machiavel, where Chandragupta and his Minister publicly pretend to quarrel, and the latter is apparently disgraced, all in order to lull their enemies into security.

On the whole, the Hindu drama, scanty as it is (there are about sixty pieces in all), is worthy of the profoundest admiration, not only because of its singular prefiguration of the European romantic theatre, but because of its sheer literary power. *The Little Clay Cart* is Shakespearian throughout in its breadth and lifelikeness. *Shakuntala* may fairly be placed above any work of Shelley, above the "starry and flowery autos" of Calderon. And *Malati and Madhava* touches in certain scenes a height attained only by the greatest dramatists.

NOTE.—As this essay is, of course, not intended for Sanskrit scholars, the writer has omitted the accents on the proper names, as in his judgment they would only confuse and annoy the general reader.

CELTIC LITERATURE

FOR twenty-five centuries the stage of our so-called civilized world was occupied by two great groups of actors: Greek and Syrian they were, protagonists and antagonists, with chorus and semi-chorus from surrounding tribes. They grew up side by side, they made their entrances separately, but soon they clashed and contended and wrought out the drama and spectacle of life. Occasionally they were swept aside by invading hordes—by Northern barbarism or Moslem culture—but they soon regained their place in the centre of the stage, and to this day they are the dominant powers in our thought. Meanwhile what went on behind the scenes?

It was not until toward the close of the eighteenth century that the existence of vast poems and mighty systems of thought in India was revealed to the European world. Even today these great reservoirs of reason and imagination are hardly accessible to the student; and they have not begun to flow over and fertilize the fields of modern thought. The intuitive profundity of many conceptions in Hindu philosophy surpasses the reasoned deductions of Greek or German metaphysic. And the closing scenes of the *Maha-*

bharata, at least, have a spiritual and ethical significance not surpassed by any European poem.

About the same time the Teutonic race "found itself" in the great myths of the *Nibelungenlied* and the Icelandic Sagas. And simultaneously the Celtic genius rose on the horizon, and spoke in a voice that thrilled Europe. Macpherson's *Ossian*, vague and confused as it is—full of interpolations which show the influence of Shakespeare and the classics,—has yet in it the fundamental characteristics of primitive and original literature.

It must be remembered, however, that one branch of the Celtic myth tree had blossomed and bourgeoned long before,—had in fact become almost the main stem of English literature. The Arthurian legend was twice a changeling, for, born in comparative simplicity or poverty in Wales, it was transported to France and decked with borrowed trappings of chivalry and Christianity. Then it was brought back by Malory, redacted by him, shorn of something of its overblown glory, and made into the typical English epic story. This, at least, is the accepted account. On the other hand it has been said that the Welsh Bards were the last persons in Europe to accept Arthur. Milton indulged the dream of using the legend as the subject of his life-work, and it is perhaps a pity he did not finally choose it rather than the more high-flying and difficult theme he undertook. At his hands we might have had something of the mystery and magic, the wild paganism, the primitive interpretation of nature and

humanity, that are in the original Welsh legends. As it is we had to wait for Tennyson to make more prim and proper and conventional the already prim and proper and conventional version of Malory. For all the redactors of the Arthurian story have dealt as hardly with the Welsh originals as Macpherson did with his Irish ones. They transformed nature myths into chivalric romances and religious poems. While on one hand they deepened and humanized the legends, on another they wiped out all that was most characteristic of the Celtic nature.

The originals, however, remained, and it is hardly too much to say that their resuscitation and recognition have been the great literary find of the past fifty years. The Welsh cycle of legends and poetical relics came earliest into notice, and it is on these that the criticism of Renan and Arnold is mainly founded. Matthew Arnold's essay on Celtic Literature is almost the best critical treatise in the language, and it is certainly the most curious *tour de force* of criticism which exists anywhere. Apparently he knew only a few words of Welsh, had examined only a few relics of Welsh literature, and was in absolute ignorance of the great mass of Irish poetry. Yet by a divination of genius which seems almost uncanny, he defined and described the Celtic genius as no one else has ever succeeded in doing. Perhaps with the instinct of an artist for effect, he forced the note of difference, of uniqueness, in Celtic literature farther than there is warrant for doing. It is difficult to believe that

the main characteristics that he found in this literature have not existed in other literatures and in all ages. "Melancholy," "Titanism," surely there is something of these qualities in the Bible and the Greek tragedians, in Dante, Job, and Jeremiah. Prometheus, Orestes, and Œdipus, the people of the Inferno,—these figures certainly express the emotions of pessimism and revolt in a larger sense than Llywarch Hên or Taliesin. And from the Iberian rather than from the Celtic race rose the arch-rebel, Don Juan. In style, too, it is pretty hard to differentiate the Celtic natural magic, which Arnold discovered, from the charm of expression in Sappho and Catullus. And the romantic interpretation of nature in the Celtic poetry! Really there are fine things of this kind in the Bacchæ of Euripides and in the wilder and weirder scenes of Virgil. Human gifts seem to be a pretty constant quantity, and one hesitates to believe that an entirely new set of talents came in with the Celts.

However, as this may be, the qualities which Arnold found in the Celtic genius are qualities of style—of personality. If one who has hardly more claim to scholarship in these matters than Arnold may presume to judge, these qualities pertain rather to Welsh than to Irish literature. The Irish legends are the much larger body of important work; they are destined, I think, to have a greater future than the Welsh, but they are epic and impersonal. They are in many respects badly written. They have neither the sense of style which the best

Welsh fragments possess, nor the form and proportion which the best Welsh stories display.

Very probably this lack of fineness of phrase and form was not so evident in the original Irish poems. Dr. Douglas Hyde has told us of the poet culture which went on in Ireland during that country's great period. There was a Druidic and Bardic organization, which must have included a large percentage of the population of the state, supported at the cost of the state. There were colleges where the bards were trained and disciplined in the conception and execution of poetry. There was an amazing list of model compositions which the students had to memorize, and there was a marvelously intricate system of versification which they had to master. If these accounts are facts, no race ever invented such a hothouse method for the production of literature. And from the hints and glimpses we have, it is probable that the Irish bards did develop an almost unequalled technique in writing. Only their technique seems to have been mainly concerned with the music of syllables, whereas the Welsh poets cared more for the pictures in words. The difference obtains yet, if we may consider the English poets as the descendants of the Welsh bards. But the original productions of the Irish poets are gone. What we have is their work reduced to writing by monkish scribes after centuries of merely oral existence. The music would be the first thing to go out of the poems under these conditions. Of some of the epic legends there are a number of recensions extant.

And these read as if the scribes had still other versions to choose from, and were so anxious not to lose anything good that they, as it were, superimposed one upon another. In the descriptions we have adjectives seven deep heralding the arrival of the nouns, and the same idea is repeated over and over again in slightly different form. This excess of particularity and vividness has almost the same effect as Macpherson's vague monotony, and leaves the figures and stories confused.

If the Irish legends are inferior to the Welsh in mystic depth, in glimpse and gleam of revelation, they are also inferior to the Icelandic Sagas in world-wide significance, in the power of imagination which grasps the beginning and end of creation and seeks to explain everything between. The Irish gods and their doings are about what a child might imagine. There was no theology in the primitive Irishman's head. He was all for this world, and if he thought of the hereafter he conceived it merely as a place where there were improved opportunities for eating, drinking, fighting, and the making of love. He was absolutely healthy and cheerful. He had a romantic regard for woman. All pleasurable things appealed to him—splendid attire, wine, song. Poetry has probably never been so much honoured as by him. With a high sense of personal honour, he submitted to one singular superstition—a sort of taboo—called *geasa*. He thought that no honest man could object to having his head cut off in single combat

if the play was fair. What, then, is the great value of the Irish epics? It consists, I think, in the clear and undistorted splendour with which absolutely natural humanity is bodied forth. Does not the description I have given recall the Homeric world and the Homeric view of life?

Homer is indeed the name that leaps to our lips as we move about among the large humanities of the Irish epics. This is not because their heroes are half gods and perform deeds which put even the Greek Herakles or Achilles to the blush. These wonders detract rather than add to the vitality of the figures. But this vitality is so rich, so abounding, that in spite of extravagance or mediocrity of style, in spite of bad narrative form, a whole world of beings, splendid, magnificent, and real, rises to us in the Irish legends. Essentially, taking the whole round of his career, Cuchulain is a finer figure than Achilles. The whole train of his mates and rivals, Fergus, Ferdiad, Conor, Mève, are tremendous triumphs of projection. The love stories of Naoise and Déirdre, of Diarmait and Grainne, rank with the most perfect in the world. For if the men of the Irish legends recall the men of Homer, the women have much of the quality of Shakespeare's heroines. The gayety, the charm, the constancy, the pathos of Rosalind and Imogen are at least implicit in them. And the world in which these figures are set, a world of joyous intercourse in splendid palaces, of out-door life in field and forest, a world of banquet and sport and

war, might be set against the world of either the Greek or English poet.

What are we to do with this treasure trove of Celtic literature? Shall we take Walt Whitman's invitation and "cross out the immensely overpaid account of Troy, Ulysses' wanderings," and turn to this new material for themes and inspiration? Or must we accept the fragmentary and amorphous Welsh and Irish poems as final and sacred works of art? Renan said sadly, "We Celts will never build our Parthenon—marble is not for us," but he claimed for his race the thrilling, penetrating cry which shakes and inspires the world. I speak under the protection of Renan's name when I say that Celtic literature has produced no great work. Its most powerful and effective production, the Arthurian legend, owes only its germ and origin to Celtic genius; it was built up by many hands in many lands. Ireland is the home of the Fairy folk, the Aes Sídh, yet no Celtic work can compare with Shakespeare's fairy comedy. Wild Wales, both the real land and its mirrored image in song, overflows with glamour, but what Welsh poem equals Coleridge's *Christabel* in undefinable depths of magic meaning? Unconquered courage, stormy despair are in the Scotch *Ossian*, yet these qualities are carried to far greater heights in Milton and Byron. The Celtic charm of expression is keen and vivid, but Wordsworth and Keats outmatch it beyond compare. If we accept Arnold's view, that many of the finest qualities of English poetry entered it from Celtic sources, we must decide that

the Celtic genius is a fecundating pollen, powerful when blown abroad, but almost inert when it remains at home.

In fact the Celtic mind would seem to be either too fine and frail, or too extravagant and florid, to create perfect works of art. It either has not the strength to build them at all or it overloads them until they break down. The relics of Celtic poetry rise before us somewhat like the circle at Stonehenge. This is not a quarry, for the sign of a mighty conception, the marks of human labour, are there; it is not a ruin, for it is built of materials too indestructible for decay. Or perhaps a better image of Celtic antiquity would be Milton's description of the animal creation, when all the beasts were struggling from the ground—"the lion pawing to get free its hinder parts." Half vital, half encumbered and embarrassed by the matter of which they are made, the Celtic legends start out into the world of art. Neither the *Heroic Cycle of Ulster*, nor the legends of Finn, nor *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, can, in their old shape, hope to become world poems. The Celtic genius which wrought them had nearly all the poetic gifts, except the gift to look before and after, to group each part in reference to the whole.

Therefore this magnificent poetic material lies open to the piracy of the poets of the world. It lacks the defence which the greatest poetry possesses of being done better than any new hand can possibly achieve. Contemporary critics will probably say that the modern poet had best busy him-

self with the modern world. Contemporary critics probably told Homer and Virgil and Milton this same thing. If contemporary critics had had their way the world would never have seen any noble or serious poetry. For in the main such poetry requires great themes and figures, and dim backgrounds to project them against. Such subjects are difficult to find, almost impossible to invent; but the Celtic genius has given us by the basketful themes unsurpassed in literature, as yet only slightly wrought by art.

GOETHE—THE OLD VIEW AND THE NEW

LEWES'S life of Goethe is a landmark of our youth. It stands in memory like a mountain peak tinted from base to summit by the rays of the sinking sun, with crowns of coloured clouds floating above it. It is the history of a conqueror, the epic of a god. Usually, literary biography, though fascinating, is sad,—as melancholy reading, Carlyle said, as the Newgate Calendar. It is almost always the story of a great soul in paltry surroundings—a record of struggles, aspirations, failures, partial successes, pitfalls, a night landscape only relieved by flashes of lightning or the remote glory of the stars. But in Lewes everything is rose-color. Here is a Prince Fortunatus to whose cradle all the good fairies thronged. His life is a royal progress; triumphal arches are erected everywhere for him. The divinity is visible in him, and everyone recognizes it. Men give him their good offices and women their hearts. It is all too good to be true; but it is eminently satisfying, like a novel where everything happens just as we wish it should.

The one feature of Lewes's book which perhaps gave it its vogue, and still thrills and inspires, is this: it is, apparently, the life of a free man.

The most of us are bound, are tied hand and foot by poverty, by duties, by custom. Goethe, according to Lewes, did just about as he pleased. We look up from our drudgery and slavery at this resplendent apparition, flawless in all its phases of dawn, or meridian power, or serene sunset glory; and the spectacle does us good. That Goethe used his liberty nobly, that he moved mainly in goodness, is only what we should expect,—what we believe would happen to us were we relieved from the chains that hold us down. And there can be no question that Lewes hit upon the secret of Goethe's life—that Goethe's main effort was to develop himself as a free agent, to rid himself of the bonds of custom, the tyranny of outside interference with His Self.

After Lewes, there came a long line of German biographers—Grimm, Düntzer, and the rest, for the most part painstaking, laborious, dull. To the true German, truth lies in a well, and for fear of missing the right fountain they dig holes all over the country. These historians and commentators rescued many minor facts and truths about Goethe's life; but no one of their books gives any new or special interpretation of that life, or can pretend to rank as literature with Lewes's splendid and daring work.

Now there comes a new biography, which has a definite intent, a novel interpretation, and one which, like Lewes's, is wrought to a single tone. The two are absolutely opposed. If Goethe in Lewes resembles Guido's picture of Dawn—

Apollo preceded by the fluttering Hours—in Bielschowsky he is more like the drooping figure of the crucified Christ, lacerated and crowned with thorns. In Lewes, he is never sick or sorry or at fault. Bielschowsky shows him prostrated by grief and suffering, thwarted in his ambitions, flying from society in deep misanthropy, misunderstood by his friends, ignored by the public. He shows the man who claimed that in his whole life he had never had one week of happiness. He shows him like a Christian flagellant baring his back to the scourge because of his relations to women, revenging his lost loves by painting his own character in the darkest hues in the heroes of many of his plays and novels—the weak Weislingen, the cowardly Clavigo, the unstable Egmont. Lewes is always up before the day to help Hyperion to his horse, but Bielschowsky dismounts his hero from his high steed and makes him walk the earth like the rest of us. It is the treatment of Euripides after that of Æschylus. Instead of Orestes in his tragic mask and the Furies with their snaky hair, we get domestic scenes and Electra at the wash-tub.

Unquestionably, Bielschowsky's method of dealing with his subject is more human and more humane than that of Lewes. But is not his method a product of our present and possibly passing mode of thought? Our age is anti-patrician—it is resolute to do justice to woman, to the poor, to the lower animals. It finds a higher pathos, a greater grandeur in Millet's

Potato-diggers than in Marius brooding over the ruins of Carthage. It is doubtful whether such beliefs will hold. Greatness must regain its place in human imaginations. Take Goethe's entanglement with women, about which Bielschowsky does not spare him, and for which he represents Goethe as unsparing in self-condemnation. Would any one of the girls or women whom Goethe loved have chosen to have lost the Goethe episode out of her life? His love was their crown of honour; it brought them regard and consideration and immortality. One and all, they would have rejected with disdain the thought of parting with the memory of it. There is a legend in the *Rāmāyana* so pat to this point that it is worth repeating. The Brides of Indra, the god of the sky, grew weary of his love,—alternating as the sky does, with extremes of heat and cold, light and darkness, tempest and calm. So they ran away from him, and, descending to the earth, wandered long, until they came to the country of the Uttarakurus. Here they found a monotony of pleasing life. The climate was equable, so that they needed hardly any shelter, the trees yielded fruits at all seasons, the people were pleasant and unperturbed. They resigned themselves to the luxurious comfort of the place, and the days glided on, one like another. But presently the memory awoke in them of that old home, of the burning joy of Indra's embraces, of the splendours, the tempests, the exultations, and the agonies they had known. Their calm security and comfort became

intolerable to them; but, alas! they had exiled themselves from that loftier life.

It is curious that while Lewes aggrandizes and Bielschowsky minimizes the personality of Goethe, the exact reverse is the case with their judgment on his literary work. Lewes's criticism is cool, sane, temperate. He hardly admits any part of Goethe's production, save the first half of *Faust* and the lyrics, to be of supreme importance. Of Goethe as a dramatist, he says that with a large infusion of Schiller's blood he might have been a Shakespeare. Bielschowsky writes with indiscriminate eulogy of everything that came from Goethe's hand. He is utterly without comparative criticism. Each piece is described, analysed, judged, as if it stood by itself in the world—was the only specimen of its kind in existence.

It seems to me that all opinion outside of Germany practically echoes the judgments of Goethe's first biographer. Is it true, for instance, as Bielschowsky seems to urge, that *Werther* is a classic of high rank? Historically, it is most important. It was the first prodigy of the storm and stress in Germany, and the parent of a vast brood of portentous monsters throughout Europe. But reading it today as a mere piece of literature, it seems slight and trivial—not to be compared with many preceding or contemporaneous English or French novels. Similarly, *Götz von Berlichingen* is a pioneer production in historical study, but it is certainly not equal in art and

interest to much that has been done since; *Egmont*, *Tasso*, *Iphigenia*, are admirable dramatic studies, but they are not dramas. Bielschowsky analyses *Hermann und Dorothea* as if it were a new *Iliad* or *Paradise Lost*; but charming as the poem is in its rich realism, it can claim only a place with the best modern idylls. Wordsworth surpasses it in profundity and Tennyson in beauty; and *Paul and Virginia*, though in prose, has had a far wider success. The second part of *Faust* is good exercise for the wits of those people who take their poetry hard, but it is formless, amorphous, unfused. Probably Goethe's greatest books, after *Faust* and the lyrics, are *Wilhelm Meister*, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, and the Conversations with Eckermann. The creative power in the first two of these ranks Goethe with the greatest novelists—hardly with the greatest poets. The criticism in Eckermann, and indeed throughout the multitude of Goethe's papers and letters, makes him the first of the discursive type of critics. He had not the central ideas or the gift of sequence of Aristotle or Lessing. And he had to the full the German power of platitude, the gift of discovering mare's-nests. There is a discussion of one of his own Märchen, in Eckermann, which is almost sublime in its solemn inanity.

Goethe's usual attitude toward his own work was one of unaffected modesty. He said of Molière, "It is well for little men like us to recur often to the works of the masters." And when his enemies tried to place Tieck on a pedestal

equal to his own, he said that the effort was as foolish as it would be for him to claim equality with Shakespeare, who was an incomparably greater power than himself.

Yet there was a time when Goethe exhibited a pomp and prodigality of creative force, an enthusiasm and fire, which bade fair to place him beside the greatest of all poets. In the Frankfort period, when the lyrics fell from his lips like the diamonds and pearls from the mouth of the maiden in the fairy tale, when *Faust* took form like autumn clouds collecting from the mist at the bidding of the wind; when the fragments of *Prometheus*, *Mahomet*, *The Wandering Jew*, were whirled off like rings from a swiftly condensing nebula,—then he was a great poet; then he was all poet. Had he chosen to have kept on with this kind of production, had he dedicated his life to the Muse, it is impossible to say to what heights he might have risen. But he took another path—a path that led to decorations and power, and of course to temporary usefulness and worldly duty well done. He became the Courtier, the Minister, and for many years poetry was little more than a pastime for him. The Muse will stand anything—except to be patronized. She will make up to a peasant like Burns, or a thief like Villon. You may beat her and starve her and quarrel with her, and she will be faithful. But treat her *en haut de bas* and she flies your house. Goethe became the great man of affairs, and then the cool rationalizing student and critic of men and

70 Goethe—Old View and the New

art; but the inexplicable gleam of imagination, the inevitable speech of inspiration, left him,—not all at once, but slowly and surely. He grew less and less a poet, as Shakespeare grew more and more one.

It is with Shakespeare, of course, that he must be measured. He outranks all other moderns, if only by reason of the wonderful dream reality of Faust. As compared with Shakespeare, he utterly fails in the creation of men—leaving out Mephistopheles, who is an improvement on Iago. Shakespeare's gallery of male portraits is unequalled in literature. From the highest to the lowest, from King Lear and Hamlet to Falstaff and Justice Shallow, the whole range of human intellect, the whole exhibition of human character in action are there. How can the weak and shambling figures of Goethe—Weislingen, Clavigo, Egmont, Wilhelm, Faust himself—come into competition with Shakespeare's vital and virile types?

It is with his female creations that Goethe runs Shakespeare hardest,—and no one else in modern literature is in the race with them. He pierces perhaps as deep into the woman mystery as his predecessor, but he lacks his variety and splendour. Philina is as true a study of the baggage of easy virtue as Cressida or Cleopatra; but how she pales beside them! Marguerite and Clärchen are as impassioned and devoted as Juliet or Imogen, but they are not so full and rich. And the type of womanhood which we

associate most with Shakespeare—the young girl, pure as crystal, but gay, daring, witty—this is entirely out of Goethe's list.

In the gift of design—the faculty that looks before and after, that fuses a work of art into one flaming whole, that tones it to one tune—here (always omitting *Faust*) Goethe is sadly to seek. Nearly all his works depend for their effect on single scenes or passages or characters half detached from the canvas. Nature worked more powerfully in Goethe than art. As he rejected the beliefs in design and special creation in the world—as he was an Evolutionist in science, a Neptunist rather than a Plutonist in geology—so in literature he preferred to let his creations arise spontaneously from his mind, rather than consciously to mould and arrange them for a predetermined effect. And in speech he preferred the ordinary sentences of human conversation to the buskined phrases of the tragedians or the weighted and involved words of the epic poets. In all this he was the precursor of the modern school, and Count Tolstoi and Mr. Howells should rise up and call him blessed. But if we look back on literature we shall find that the things that have lasted best are those that have been best put together, that art and style are not negligible quantities. Goethe, indeed, strove after art and style with all his heart and soul, but he had not the instinct for them.

The friends of Goethe will perhaps put most

72 Goethe—Old View and the New

stress on his position as a teacher of mankind. And there is a vast amount of wisdom in his works—wisdom of the sagacious, prudent, low flying quality which we find in the essays of Lord Bacon or the proverbs of Franklin. “Here or nowhere is America” is a remarkable saying—but it would kill off the Columbuses. “Let every man sweep the street before his own door” is good sense—but it is also narrow selfishness. On the other hand, there is throughout Shakespeare’s works a high spirit, a nobleness, a generosity and largeness of soul, both in the gnomic utterances and in the pictures of life, for which we look in vain in the literature of his more sober and prosaic rival. This pomp and prodigality of heaven must for all time appeal to the young, the ardent, the high-minded, while Goethe’s sagacity will make him the favourite of those who do not expect too much of man or life.

THE SPLENDID YEARS OF MODERN LITERATURE

CRITICISM is in the main a discovery of the known, an exploration of the familiar. The contours, the comparative heights, the water-sheds of literary creation and thought, are in a state of apparent change. Each generation fixes them to suit itself; but new geodetic surveys are always needed. But every surveyor's report swarms with errors. Literary work, once done, is certain enough in itself, but opinion about it varies. It is like a cloud trying to form a judgment in regard to the solid earth. Nevertheless, the attempt to fix the true relations of the eminences and valleys of human creation must go on. Hardly anything is more important for us than to know what in the literature of the past we ought most to admire and emulate.

What is the most important body of literature produced in modern times? National prejudices, class feelings, the interests and passions of mankind, becloud such an inquiry. One can only offer an opinion and an argument. To me it seems that—setting aside Goethe, who was a world in himself—the work done by the generation which gave the Romantic revival to England surpasses

74 The Years of Modern Literature

anything that has been done anywhere else during the last two hundred years.

The English eighteenth-century literature, wonderful as it is in variety and human compass, is distinctly on a lower plane. In effectiveness, the work of the Encyclopædists in France was perhaps as great; but the torches of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot were blown out by the blaze they kindled. Few of their books have intrinsic permanent value. The great French outburst of 1830 was measurably a replica of the preceding English one, to which it was inferior in splendour and genetic power. Chateaubriand and Lamartine inherit from Byron. Hugo and Dumas hold from Scott. Swinburne called Musset Byron's attendant dwarf; perhaps it would be fairer to say that he is Shakespeare's page. Russian literature, built up during the last century, is wanting in light and distinction; it is a literature without fresh air. To an outsider, at least, it seems like a confused and dreary struggle in the dark—the tumult of men in a prison from which they cannot escape. The literature of the Scandinavian peoples sounds a good deal like the shrieks of men undergoing torture. In Italy, Manzoni was of the blood of Scott and Byron; and while Leopardi is unique, he is not large enough to weigh down the scales against the Englishmen. Our American literature, except for the work of one or two poets, is too tame and secondary to come into comparison. And recent English literature seems to see life as through a telescope reversed; everything is small or blurred. Tennyson is the idyllist,

a maker of small though perfect things. Carlyle in the company of the great Georgians would almost show like Thersites in the Grecian camp, or like the lame Vulcan on Olympus. Altogether it is hard to see anywhere such a company of proud and peculiar presences, such a senate of intellect, as appeared in England about the beginning of the nineteenth century.

It really began with Burns; for though he belongs to the eighteenth century by his satire and didactic turn, he sounded pretty nearly all the notes of the new era—its rebellion, its romance, its personal passion. He is more like Goethe than any other modern, and as far as he goes he is quite as great. Goethe's most characteristic qualities—intense naturalness and undeviating truth—are more than matched by the author of the Scotch songs, *Tam O'Shanter* and *The Jolly Beggars*.

Wordsworth is surely the modern king of the spiritual world. He dwelt in a region beyond the ken of most poets—a place of high tranquillity where the bird of peace sits brooding on the calmed wave. The poet of nature—yes, but his nature is not the catalogue of outward things which even great poets give; it is the verity to which man is only an incident; it is the melting-pot of generations; it is the very body of the Eternal himself.

Coleridge, though he gave a good part of his mind to the making of Wordsworth, is not spiritual. He is the lord of the supersensuous, of that unreal world of glamour and dream image which is the most real thing in existence for the finer sort of

76 The Years of Modern Literature

minds. It was his poetry and criticism that really broke the eighteenth century's cast-iron system of common sense, made explicable the great poetry of the past, and gave the new men the keys to that domain.

There are two great divisions among writers—those who speak for themselves, and those through whom others speak,—in other words, the lyric and the dramatic types. Largely this era was a lyric one, an era of great personalities who swept the world with their passion or their grief. But it had its supreme creative artist in Scott, who was objective even in his poetry. It is an Arab superstition that he who draws or paints the picture of a human being must on the Last Day furnish it with a soul to be condemned or rewarded. What an expense Scott would be in that case! And amid the cohorts of the man-created, what a vast and predominant array would owe allegiance to him!

Byron was the dynamo of his generation—the most splendid figure, the greatest force, English literature has produced. Like Tamburlane holloaing to the harnessed Kings of Asia, Byron could boast of driving the intellect of Europe in leash. His influence extended everywhere, from Russia to the two Americas. His world was the world of passion and politics and affairs, but in this world his books were events comparable with the French Revolution or the campaigns of Napoleon. And his track is not yet a faded one. The richness and splendour of his literary gifts will keep his works

alive when those of Voltaire and Rousseau are comparatively forgotten.

Shelley was the prophet of his time, a Memnon of tomorrow. It needs only a glance at contemporary literature and life to see how much his spirit is awake. The seed ideas that he flung about have taken root, are growing on every side. In a literary way, he brought into the world a haunting strain of music, new and perfect, which must live on even if his ideas and policies wither away.

All these men were something more than writers, but Keats was literature incarnate—the pure artist living for image and expression. Borrowing from the best of his predecessors, he attained such mastery of language that he set his stamp upon two generations of his followers, as Pope did on two generations of his. Perhaps such richly floriated work has been overdone: there is need to recur to the granite foundation-stuff of thought and feeling. But in Keats's mature work there is no weakness. Largeness and loveliness were never more perfectly welded together.

These were the stars of first magnitude in that English constellation. It speaks volumes for their brilliancy when an orb like Landor could roll by unattached, unnoticed; when the novel world of Miss Austen could spring into being in their midst without attracting attention. There is enough good reading in Landor to give us measureless content; Miss Austen is surely the equal of any English novelist, excepting Dickens, since her day; yet when we think of them in connection with

78 The Years of Modern Literature

the Georgian group, neither of them looms large.

And the satellites of this system were mighty and self-shining lights. There was Moore, a true and tender lyricist who knew better than most of them how to make a song. There was Campbell, whose resonant verse expressed a nation's exultation as it has never been done before or since. There were Hazlitt, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, De Quincey, and Wilson—essayists who as a group can hardly be matched in literature. There were writers of single remarkable books—Godwin, Beckford, Mrs. Shelley. All told, the display was dazzling.

It was pre-eminently an age of poets. Prose has been winning on poetry in every language in modern times. The greatest triumphs of the men of 1830 in France were prose triumphs; and the same may fairly be said of the Victorian writers. But in the English Romantic revival, poetry made its last great stand for supremacy. The verse of Burns and Scott and Byron swept the world. For a time, prose was in eclipse. Now, putting aside any other element of superiority, the concentration of verse gives it a far greater chance of immortality than prose possesses. Verse is to prose as diamonds are to dust. It lasts longer, and value is more easily portable in it. As books accumulate in incredible numbers, it looks as if the race would have to throw away all but the most concentrated and quintessential records of its experience. Time will do what the Caliph Omar did to winnow our libraries. But poetry takes up comparatively little space, and it is easily remembered.

The Years of Modern Literature 79

The Georgian era was an era of youth. Nearly all its writers did their great work early, and the majority of them died young. The personalities and actions of the young are certainly more attractive to mankind than those that pertain to mature humanity. Balzac may discover the middle-aged heroine, but she will never displace the Juliets and Gretchens in the affection of the world.

Again, the Georgians were a race of divine amateurs. Among the chiefs, Scott was the only professional author—the only one who deliberately wrote for money. Schopenhauer said that the ruin of literature came about when men found that they could make money by books. A great part of modern literature reads as if it was written to provide frocks for the authors' wives. Those who work with such ulterior motive must keep a wary eye on the market; they must cog and flatter and palter. The Georgians wrote in scorn of consequence. They could play at pitch-and-toss with the universe. They could dare everything.

All in all, then, I think it is tolerably certain that the Georgian outburst was the most important apparition of literary genius that the world has seen in modern times. No single figure of its group is equal to Shakespeare or Milton or Molière or Goethe. But in the mass they surpass any but the greatest of those. Vast and various as the world's literature has become since, I doubt if taken together it is equal in value to the work of those few years in one country. For one thing, recent literature has taken a turn downward. It

80 The Years of Modern Literature

has largely exchanged verse for prose; it has mingled with the crowd on the levels, instead of staying with the shining ones on the hills; it has dealt very exclusively with the passive peculiarities of women, rather than with the active energies of men. If we are going to have a great literature again, it seems to me that we must think a great deal on the Georgian epoch.

OUR PIONEER AMERICAN POET

THERE are estates which are held by the payment of a rose or a piece of fruit in annual rent. The intellectual domains which we take from great writers deserve at least an equal acknowledgment. Some legacies indeed of this kind demand knight-service: we must go to war to defend our king and almoner, dead though he be. Our first true American poet, however, does not need the help of sword or torch. He is serene and secure in his modest greatness, and there is nothing for us to do but to bring to his grave-throne our small tributes of criticism and appreciation.

It is related of Lao Tsze that he was carried in his mother's womb for seventy or eighty years, so that when he was born his hair was white and his form hoar with antiquity. The youth of nineteen, who, in a new country, amid a race of pioneers, wrote *Thanatopsis* certainly recalls the Chinese philosopher. The dominant note in William Cullen Bryant's poetry is age. Age, engulfment, resignation, death,—these motives return again and again in his poems. They are good themes, and there is no reason why a poet should not be especially born to express them; but the singular

thing is that they should be sung as the herald notes of our poetic dawn. One would think that then, if at all, would sound the music of Spring and Resurrection; then would glow pictures of buoyant action—the red colours of love and war.

Without meaning anything but praise, it may be said of Bryant's poems in general that Wordsworth forgot to write them. A few of them rise to the height of Wordsworth's best, and they never sink to the level of his worst. But of course in mass, in range, in fire, the English poet is immeasurably beyond his American double or pupil. There is a difference, too, in their view of Nature and outlook on man's destiny. Wordsworth is the poet of immortality—of resurrection; the Nature he loved was ablaze with Spirit. Bryant's Nature is the Nature of the chemists and geologists and geographers. He lacked metaphysics. How often has he repeated the idea of man returning to his original elements,—of engulfment in the grave! By iteration he makes it impressive. Yet it is probably best to touch such thoughts, and leave them. Omar's speaking jar gives us a more vivid sense of the matter. And after all, the idea, poetically speaking, is nothing much. If man is spirit, his sinking into the grave is of little consequence; and if earth is spirit, too, it is of still less. It is remarkable that Bryant keeps his Stoic conception of virtue and morality so high while yielding to an almost Lucretian sense of the constitution of the world.

Bryant has in poetry the felicity which the

Psalmist prayed for,—neither poverty nor riches. Yet his severe taste saved him from that inevitable instinct for the second-best which has ruined so much American verse. He always recalls the masters; and when it is not Wordsworth's star which is in the ascendant, it is that of Milton, or Gray, or Collins. He was perhaps the most careful student of verse we have had. But his music is too often a recollected air. His pictures—achieving, as they frequently do, the virgin phrase, cool, dewy, and unravished of man—lack yet the ecstasy of more daring souls. The sacred spark in him was a lambent phosphorescence, incapable of communicating heat or fire.

Lyrical poetry does not lend itself easily to criticism. The spontaneous gush of thought, the record of fleeting emotion, it is too evanescent in its nature to admit of dissection. One does not analyse thistle-down, or break a butterfly on the wheel. When the creating and combining powers come in, we can try to trace their progression and culmination in a work of genius, and compare the results with other productions of a like order. But a good lyric ought to be unitary and unique. Perhaps the best way to discuss a writer whose work consists of a multitude of short pieces is to state first the general impression they produce, and then go on and say what one can of the single poems.

The largest division of Bryant's work is the group of blank-verse pieces including *Thanatopsis*, *The Forest Hymn*, *The Prairies*, *Earth*, *Hymn to*

Death, The Flood of Years, and a few others. As far as theme and matter are concerned, they are practically all one,—the same thoughts in varied settings. The earliest written of them sums up their whole message, and the world has accepted it as the greatest. In manner, however, they are equally good; and it is a manner which makes a small thing seem almost colossal. The blank verse is studied from Wordsworth, who got his by inheritance through Cowper from Milton. Neither in Wordsworth nor in Bryant, however, is there anything which much resembles Milton's sidereal style. And the two later poets differ from each other. In Wordsworth's best blank verse there is a sense of growth, a pulsating vitality, a pushing upward as of forest trees, each trying to be tallest. In Bryant's lines there is the faltering, soundless fall of autumn leaves detaching themselves without wind. His verse, however, is a most fit instrument for the meditative mood. Inferior in passages to Wordsworth's similar work, it is superior in single lines, and has far fewer lapses into prose.

Bryant's poems which bear upon wild life in America, aboriginal or that of the early settlers, such as *The Disinterred Warrior*, *The Hunter of the Prairies*, *Catterskill Falls*, have all a stamp of deep and grave sincerity. They are miniatures, and require a magnifying-glass to bring out their merits. But even after Cooper's great canvases, painted with a broad brush, these little vignettes repay study.

There are a good many of Bryant's minor pieces which have a sort of faded elegance, as if they were originally written for the old Books of Beauty—the Annuals of our early literature. They are not in the least vital,—they are purely manufactured; but their artifice is well done. A list of these would be too long to give, but in it would be *The Song of the Greek Amazon*, *Song of Pitcairn's Island*, *The Damsel of Peru*. A poem like *The Lapse of Time* is of a higher mood; yet it too is irritating: it is so near the commonplace, yet manages to evade actual prosaism. It reminds one of some of the slighter, prelusive strains of Collins, which have nothing in them but an ineffable grace—the classic air.

But I must come to the handful of lyrics which are Bryant's real title-deeds to fame signed and sealed by the Muse. Two little odes I would first mention, not for any special mark of thought or phrase which they possess, but because of their originality in metre. They are *The Greek Partisan* and an *Ode for a Celebration*. Most poets, when they try to bring a variety of rhythm into a short compass, merely change the length of their lines; but Bryant here changes the key of the music, as Gray did. These brief poems have in consequence a dancing movement which is most effective.

The Siesta is probably the nearest approach to a real song that Bryant ever wrote. Some other of his things which are labelled songs are as wooden as clothes-pegs, as cold as icicles. *The Song of Mariqn's Men* is a martial lyric, and a fine one,

though it comes far short of equalling the war-poems of Burns and Campbell, or even two more recent American patriotic strains, *The Blue and the Gray* and *The Bivouac of the Dead*. Bryant's *Greek Boy* is also a Tyrtarean poem, and has real rather than painted fire. It is of course reminiscent of Byron's *Isles of Greece*.

In *June* for almost the first time we find Bryant standing unpropped by any other poet. All the art he had learned from Gray and Collins and Wordsworth was in his mind when he wrote it, but for the nonce he forgot them and spoke straight from his soul. The diction of the piece is full of floating gold which concentrates into one or two ingot-like phrases. *Oh, Fairest of the Rural Maids* is almost equally good, but here Bryant leans again on Wordsworth's shoulder, as he does in *The Fringed Gentian*. *Autumn Woods* is entirely original and absolutely flawless. Singularly enough, Bryant, usually so grave, not to say drab, in his colouring, here gives the gayest picture of American autumn which exists in our literature. Mark the art or the unconscious truth with which he assembles all the bright aspects of the season,—the woods which have put their glory on, the coloured landscape, the gay company of trees, the painted leaves, the sun's quiet smile, the absence of gloom where many branches meet, the stream that shines with the image of its golden screen, the roseate canopy where a maiden's blush would be unmarked! The word "coloured" is repeated three times, probably with intention.

Altogether it is the most perfect piece of objective work which Bryant ever achieved, and needs only a touch of magical imagination to place it fairly by the side of Keats's best. Hardly less admirable is *The Death of the Flowers*, a little elegy whose sweet and gentle perfection make of it a sister-song to Collins's *Fidele*, and even render it worthy to stand, at some remove, in the presence of the Death Song in *Cymbeline*. The simple fitness of the epithets throughout the piece is Greek; and the exquisitely modulated metre is perhaps the most lyrical movement in all Bryant's verse.

There remain Bryant's three crowning poems—*To the Past*, *Lines to a Waterfowl*, and *The Battle-field*. The first has an air of antique greatness. Its bareness is impressive as of a Spanish hidalgo presiding at his empty board with an inestimable jewel or two, heirlooms spared by Fate, glittering on his fingers. The piece contains what is probably Bryant's finest line,

"And features, the great soul's apparent seat,"
although

"Old ocean's grey and melancholy waste,"
from *Thanatopsis*, and

"The desert and illimitable air,"

of the *Lines to a Waterfowl*, are near rivals. The last-named poem is the quintessence of Bryant's genius. Neither in motive nor manner does it recall any other poet, and there is none throughout

time who would not be proud to own it. Yet I think *The Battlefield* is his final and supreme triumph. Beauty and splendour of picture are here, and a grandeur of utterance which might have been thundered from Sinai.

What is Bryant's rank among our American singers? Poe is greatest in prose, his verse being merely the gold fringe on his prose suit of sables; yet even in poetry he keeps his precedence. He keeps it by reason of his strange originality, his almost unequalled gift of proportion and effect, his charm of haunting melody and unforgettable picturing. In weight and felicity of single phrase, however, he is certainly not equal to either Bryant or Emerson; and by virtue of this felicity, allied to a considerable gift of design, Bryant, I should say, must rank second. Emerson's shower of verbal sparks, which hardly ever coalesced into a star-like poem, can place him only third. Walt Whitman is a purely lyrical poet, but even yet it is hard to assay and value his dithyrambic verse. In the great battle of the *Rāmāyana*, Laksmana is mortally wounded, and Hanuman, the monkey magician of the epic, is sent to a distant mountain for an herb of healing to revive the hero. What with the length of the journey and his adventures by the way, Hanuman forgets the description of the plant. "Something there was," he says, "of red, something of white, something of gold." But he cannot make up his mind which of the flowering things he sees around him is the right one; so he plucks up the whole mountain by the roots, and

conveys it back to the field of battle. This is perhaps an exaggerated comparison for Whitman's poetry; there is a sense of mass and greatness in him, yet it is most difficult to discover in all his pages that plant of charm and healing which we call poetry.

Lowell is reported to have said, late in life, "We were none of us as great poets as we thought we were." None indeed of our classic writers had, in poetry at least, any great creative gifts. There were lyrists, occasional poets; and it is useless to try to push lyrical and occasional poetry into competition with the large, continued creations of literature. The question is easily decided. Let anyone ask himself which the world could better afford to lose, all the poetry—the best of its kind in the language—contained in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, or Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The verdict could hardly be long in doubt. Much would we miss, much would drop from us, if the passion and pathos and imagination of England's lyrists were obliterated; but *Hamlet* is woven into the very texture of the souls, not only of our race, but of mankind. Yet it is only one of a number of nearly equal plays by a single author. And the same judgment would almost certainly have to be rendered if the case were *Paradise Lost* against the whole body of lyrical verse in English. However, we cannot do without lyrical poetry, and we may be glad that we have in Bryant a singer who has added appreciably to the world's stock of the best in this sort of writing.

A MASTER OF MAXIMS

IT is often difficult to fix the *genre* of a master of the human spirit who uses words as his tools of work. Edmund Burke, comparing himself with his friends of the Literary Club, modestly disclaimed the title of "man of letters." And in the main he was right. All his vast knowledge, and world-sweeping thought, and processional train of rich-apparelled words, were set to the service of politics,—given up to expounding the art of governing mankind. The ethical writer is as sadly to seek in pure literature as the political one. Literature of itself is disinterested. It has no axe to grind. It proposes no material, or even spiritual end. It is simply a report of the universe and mankind as they are, or a vision of them as they are dreamed to be. It is a second creation, hardly less real than the first. Compared with the poet and philosopher, the ethical and didactic writer is as a sign-post which gives the direction, to the landscape about it.

It may be a more important thing to rule or reform men than to reproduce them in art,—to give birth, that is, not to beings of brief date, but to images of immortality. But it is certainly a different thing; and when the writer on conduct or

affairs seeks to take his place in literature, he must be content to rank as second-rate. In the muster-rolls of Greek and Latin literature, what place has Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius? The great disks of Homer and Plato, Virgil and Lucretius, occult their tiny lamps or dim them in a day of glory. In the end, a writer of books must be judged by the canons of literature. This is becoming true even of the great religious documents of the world—its Bibles. How much more must it be the case with books which make no claim to be inspired!

It is an honourable feature in human character that it craves to be led and guided toward the right. The didactic writer always has his work cut out for him, and is assured of power and influence. But prophet succeeds prophet; and, once past, oblivion yawns for most of them. For one thing, axioms, as Keats said, are not axioms until they have been proved upon our pulses. They have a way of turning out half-truths, or no truths at all, as circumstances alter. They are mutually contradictory. If all the maxims and proverbial sayings of the world were brought together, they would destroy each other like a roomful of Kilkenny cats. Human nature is too profound and mysterious to be bound up in a code of short sayings. The great philosophies and poems of the world exist on an entirely different plane. The first may be unprovable, and the second untrue; the first may merely illuminate the walls of our prison-house, and the second may deal with impossible creations—gods, and demons,

and superhuman men. But what matters that? They are great imaginations, to which we must return again and again for exaltation and refreshment. Side by side with the world of reality exists this phantom world; and the man who succeeds in extending it, or adding to its population, takes, humanly speaking, the highest place. Literature teaches also—but it teaches not by the cold, inert method of precept, but by the vivid and vital force of example. Achilles moulded all antiquity to his own image, and Hamlet has cast his shadow on the whole of modern life.

Critics are often accused of ingratitude in dealing with great men. If these bring us good gifts, it is said, let us humbly accept them, and not stop to investigate their value or cost. But always with criticism there are present the questions of precedence and permanence. Who is entitled to the crown? and which wreath is of unfading amaranth? In the case of Emerson, there is much to confuse American criticism. Respect for his lofty character, local loyalty, gratitude for guidance in a great national crisis,—all these things make him loom large in our eyes. He did many things, but essentially he is a teacher—a preacher. His works are the sublimed essence of a myriad of New England sermons. He was a maker of moral maxims; a teacher of conduct. In some moods, he said, the verse of Shakespeare would sound like the tinkling of tin pans. He said also that his own effort was always to discard the wrappings of things and to get at their innermost secret. He preferred to put

his hand on the seed of the tree, rather than to enjoy its full growth and efflorescence. In this, his instinct was the opposite of the true poet, who desires to multiply phenomena and to envisage the whole mass of life. His effort was always the effort of the maxim-maker to condense all experience into a phrase.

There are two traditional incidents in the history of philosophy, which come to mind in thinking of Emerson: one, the meeting of the young Socrates with Parmenides; the other, the interview between the equally youthful Confucius and the ancient master of mystery and mysticism, Lao Tsze. In both cases the result was apparently the same. The old men listened with an ironic smile to the clear, confident, everyday wisdom of the new teachers of conduct and morals. Something like this may well have happened at the first meeting of Carlyle and Emerson. Emerson is our village Socrates. He has a wise word for all men's daily needs. He admonishes and helps. But, compared with the cloudy, lightning-fulgent Carlyle, he is trivial and shallow and prosaic.

Emerson's essays are full of allusions to philosophy. Plato and Zoroaster and the Rig Veda do business at the old stand on almost every other page. Yet one doubts whether he was really capable of forming a metaphysical concept. He could never concentrate his thoughts long enough on one subject to do so. He scorns logic and cohesion. His sentences are a heap of glittering particles that run through one's fingers. Hence

his baffling quality. There is no founding anything on him. He is a veritable quicksand of an author. Nearly every great thinker has some central thought fixed firm against all shifting tides and winds. The central thought of Plato is the theory of Ideas,—the assertion of the apparitional character of the seemingly real world. The central thought of Pascal is that of Human Intelligence confronting the Universe and strangled by it like Laocoön in the inexorable coils of the snake. The central thought of Schopenhauer is the absurdity of life. We know where to have these writers,—but Emerson we never know. He chops and changes with every book he has been reading, or with every reader he desires to mould. Like Polonius, he is willing to agree that the cloud may be a camel, or a whale, or a weasel. And he is never thorough, in Strafford's sense of the word. He writes you about the scholar or the poet,—and the strain rises like a stream of rich distilled perfume; but then it occurs to him that the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker are also vertebrate animals, and have a certain reason for being, and he gives you their Apotheosis. What he was after, all his life, was practicable idealism. But practicable idealism is a contradiction in terms, and sacrifices both the ideal and the practical.

It seems like flying in the face of Providence, to repine at our luck in having a writer who is filled with a sense of the brightness of things,—who believes only in the best in human nature.

But there is a lack of reality in the optimistic view. Emerson reminds one of the artist who was commissioned to paint a picture of the crossing of the Red Sea. When he exhibited his canvas it was merely one expanse of red paint. "Why," said his patron, "where are the Israelites and Egyptians?" "Oh," answered the artist, "the Israelites have crossed over, and the Egyptians are all drowned." In Emerson's books, human nature has passed on, or is hidden in a field of tenuous light.

Three, at least, of Emerson's English contemporaries must dispute with him the primacy in spiritual and ethical thought. They are Carlyle, Newman, and Ruskin. Carlyle is out of all measure the largest of the group. He was half artist, half moralist. If in his capacity of moralist his heart was full of angry disdain of the pernicious race of mortals "mostly fools," as an artist he could take delight in their weakness and waywardness. He had the artist's love of deep shadows; and the darkness of the gloomy masses of mankind was all the more welcome to him in that it served to set off the splendour of the few great heroic figures whom he wholly loved. Emerson was Carlyle's pupil. He reproduced him, but he reproduced him as a photographic negative does—reversing all the lights and shades. Like a good witch, he reads the spell backwards; and a lovely fairy appears where before was a hideous hobgoblin. He turns all Carlyle's roughness to favour and to prettiness, and out of his weltering chaos made a really charming world where nice people

can walk up and down. But when one of Homer's heroes, hard pressed, calls for superhuman aid, the god comes to him in a cloud,—and with the cloud withdraws the god.

Cardinal Newman, bottomed on faith and authority, is a sure refuge to many who tire of Carlyle's stormy frowns, and who find no strength in Emerson's smiling cheerfulness. Like Carlyle he is melancholy; but his melancholy is full of beauty,—

“Elysian beauty, melancholy grace,
Brought from a pensive tho' a happy place.”

Even Newman's style is midway between the two. If he has no sentences with the arrowy keenness of Emerson, and no passages with the sunset splendour of Carlyle, he has pages and chapters of more perfect and even excellence than either, and when all were fighting over questions of ethics and morals, his message to mankind,—that it should believe in a Church in which so many and such mighty minds have believed,—has immense practical utility.

Ruskin is the least original of this group of latter-day prophets. But his pictured style outglows any prose the others have wrought; and the ardour with which he championed every spiritual cause, the earnestness with which he descended into every arena, the self-sacrifice which drove him into the back-alleys of the world,—these make him the most missionary spirit of them all.

There remains for me to say something of

Emerson's poetry. As in Arnold's case, the Muse can defend her son. In the last analysis, when we have driven off the thin vapours of his eclectic borrowings and withdrawn the fluid gold of his prose maxims, there is left a residuum of indestructible crystals of verse. They are the tiniest and most fragmentary crystals ever produced by a considerable poet; but they flash with the white light of the diamond. Imagination failed him, the plastic gift failed him, in pieces of any length; but there are a score or two of phrases, lines, quatrains, fragments, which have a verbal felicity hardly equalled elsewhere in American poetry.

"Oh, tenderly the haughty day
Fills its blue urn with fire,"—

That is *style*, new, unique, and as good as the best.

Emerson, on the whole, seems to me an odd combination of the natures of St. Francis and Benjamin Franklin,—which type appears somehow suited to our American ideals. His spirituality is a corrective to our materialism, and his canniness a compliment to it. But he can never be satisfactory to the imaginative or the logical mind. He has not the energy, or the richness, or the profundity, to appeal to those who have fed upon the great poets and philosophers. He was a purveyor of first-lessons in philosophy, and of proverbial rules of life for intellectual children. He may keep an audience of these to the end; or they may seek other masters. But great men will pass him by with but a slight salute.

ARNOLD AND LOWELL

HAIL to the English-speaking Dioscuri of our past age! Chief critics of their time, they really, though separated by the seas, fought side by side in the fight for the humanities against materialism. Their activities were parallel. One roused the quarry up, and the other killed it. One lifted up his torch and lit the recesses of the jungle, and the other sent his arrows in fierce flight amid the herds of its hoofed and tusked denizens.

The literature and art of any generation are the surplusage of its life,—what is left over after its debts and expenses have been paid. They are the fund which is handed on to posterity; and the great critics are the executors, the guardians, the distributors of this fund. It is the business of criticism to keep clear and distinct the intellectual and spiritual triumphs of the past, and to spur new minds on to emulation of such achievements. But for criticism, the masterpieces of literature and art would be like the buried cities of Yucatan—shapeless mounds overgrown with inextricable forest.

The instincts of both Arnold and Lowell were to be builders of temples and cities of their own rather

than clearers of the rubbish of the past or pathfinders and guides to their generation. Possibly their most permanent work is in pure art—the expression of emotion, or greatness, or beauty; but the world found them so useful as critics that it kept them at that less congenial business. They had the blood of kings in them, but their contemporaries insisted on placing them in the seats of judges.

In criticism, Lowell is more the preserver of the Past; Arnold, more the originator, the innovator, in the Present. Lowell's essays were a little old-fashioned even when they were born; but, like many old-fashioned things, they have a richness and simplicity that will outlast novelties. His papers have a fulness, an extracted blend of thinking, which makes us recur to them again and again. Scattered over them are passages whose diction is of weightier metal than anything in Arnold. Arnold is alert, striking, even startling. He has a new analysis. His ideas open up vistas where before was gloom. His phrases are the keenest and handiest of critical weapons. Perhaps they were so deft and easy of use that their edges have become a little dulled. Often, too, they had an air of finality about them—and finalities are always half-truths at best.

Both critics have their days of languor, their list of failures. Lowell's cleverness often became smartness, and Arnold's fastidiousness frequently landed him in strange company. Lowell was too uncertain in his judgments, and Arnold too oracu-

lar. Lowell was of two minds about Dryden, and a dozen about Pope; and his essay on Keats is as unsatisfactory as that of Arnold on Shelley. Both men, however, illustrated the truth that the best criticism is by the way—is to be found in side-flashes of light on single subjects, rather than in a determinate attempt to get the whole body of literature judged in lump.

It may be against the permanence of Arnold's criticism, that it was too effective,—that it was caught up and absorbed in the thinking of the day. Once read, Arnold cannot be forgotten—which may be an argument against reading him anew; whereas Lowell's leisurely performances, more deeply infused with personality, more artistically fashioned, leave only a faint memory in our minds, which still lures us to read them again and again.

When it comes to the poetry of the two men, the exact reverse of all this is the case. Lowell's poetry impresses us tremendously on a first reading,—carries us off our feet. But we do not want—at least, I do not want—to recur to it again. Arnold's verse, on the other hand, seems a little cold and difficult at first, but it fascinates, and we find ourselves going back and back to it and carrying it always in our memory. The reason is that Lowell in verse is primarily a moralist, a preacher; while Arnold is above all things an artist. Lowell started in poetry with as good a sensuous equipment as Arnold; but his New England conscience laboured mightily within him, and killed off the images of beauty and grandeur.

Arnold and Lowell

The Sensuous presented her undraped figure to him, but Didacticism plucked him back. He saw flowers blossoming beyond him, but he was tied to his New England rocks. All that noble emotion and high enthusiasm and Drydenic eloquence could do he accomplished in the *Commemoration Ode*, *The Cathedral*, and many other pieces. They convince, but they do not charm. The soul of poetry is trying to get into a body in order to reach us. And once, in the opening lines of *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, it attains its desire. How different is it with Arnold! He too is laden with Didacticism, with the passion of thought; but he rarely allows these to overweight the form. The great ideas of the *Obermann* pieces are embodied in images which we can see and feel. The blank verse of *Empedocles* is as real as the mountain meadows and thickets themselves; and the enchanting lyrics of that piece gleam like mountain nymphs rising from their bath. The thoughts and words and cadences of *The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis* are like one rich draught distilled from a thousand simples. There can be little question which is the greater poet.

Perhaps Lowell's most unique claim to remembrance is his creative humour. Here and there in his essays are little sketches of character which are as good as Goldsmith's work in that kind. *The Courtin'* is a perfect idyl of humour and tenderness. But it is the *Biglow Papers* which prove him to be, not certainly our greatest humourist, but our best—if that distinction can be under-

stood. He did for New England, in a minor way, what Scott or Burns did for Scotland—set his community on its legs, gave it a separate existence in literature, bodied forth the provincialities and oddities which differentiated it from the rest of the world. The vein of humour was in Arnold also, but it only cropped out in one little book, *Friendship's Garland*. This handful of scenes, however, is so replete with wit and humour and creative genius that one is willing to believe in Arnold's ability to project character to any extent had he desired. The balance of good work in this kind is largely in Lowell's favour. In satire he is without competition from his rival. The *Fable for Critics*, while too good-natured and too entirely of the day to be of great value, has not been surpassed in America, and, indeed, it is difficult to see that there is anything better in English literature since Byron.

Letter-writing is hardly yet ranked with the accepted forms of literature, but I think it will come more and more to be received as a delightful kind of art. Now Lowell's letters are the best we have yet had from an American writer; indeed, they are the only ones which can vie with the best in English literature. Poe's letters are the poorest products of his pen. Lanier's have much charm, but he was so critically wrong-headed about so many things that his affectionateness and enthusiasm lose their effect. Arnold's letters, so far as they have been given to the public, are dull beyond anything one would deem possible. They

are the epistles of an overworked and weary Inspector of Schools, and it would require a divining-rod to discover any fount of charm in them.

Lowell and Arnold were both in a large degree public men. They were not mere cloistered students, belletristic triflers—as one of them ironically dubbed himself; they were men who mingled in the affairs of the world, and whose opinions and acts helped to mould great events. The apparent weight of influence is on Lowell's side. He was in the thick of the fight from the first. His Abolition poems, the *Biglow Papers*, his many political essays before and during the Civil War, undoubtedly made him one of the leaders who guided our Republic during trying years. And afterwards, his Ambassadorships and his addresses in England fairly won him his place as our First Citizen. He defended Democracy; but while he loved homely humanity, it is difficult to believe that he had much faith in the wisdom of the masses. Like every poet, he admired extraordinary men and women, and he thought that Democracy was the best soil to bring them forth. In comparison with these activities, Arnold's public efforts seem modest ones. Yet if we count his work in school reform, the solvent character of the ideas and phrases about social life which he put into circulation, and the effect of his keen and just criticism of Irish affairs, we may find that his influence was at least equal to that of his more eminent contemporary.

There was one field into which Arnold adven-

tured where Lowell did not follow him. He gave up some of his best years to a revision of Christianity—to the formulation of a working faith for the modern man. He put the ideas of the German and French rationalists into attractive guise, gave them the stamp of his own nature. But his efforts can hardly be counted more than a pleasing futility. His idea of a religion with the supernatural, the miraculous, left out, is no more like a real religion than a domestic Tabby purring by the fireside is like the Lion of the Desert, the lordly dreamer whose roar dominates the jungle. He was neither a great enough poet nor a deep enough philosopher to understand how Superstition—"mother of form and fear"—is enthroned in the stoutest and noblest breasts. Man knows that he is composed of and surrounded by miracles and mysteries. A few more or less do not matter to him; rather, he craves them as explaining the ones he feels. In the Roman Empire there were writers and teachers of philosophy and ethics in plenty—Academics, Stoics, Epicureans. They formulated maxims and systems of morality as good as any the world has known; but the world about them cared little for their labours. When the Latin race found its own first simple mythologies fading away, it opened its doors to the gorgeous and mystical worships of the East. The Magna Mater, Isis, Osiris, and Anubis, entered in turn the gates of Rome. Men marshalled themselves to follow Cybele; they placed themselves under a platform and bathed in the blood of a bull slaughtered

above—so to receive purification. And when Christianity dawned upon the Western World it was not accepted and believed because of the personal charm of its founder, because of his sweet reasonableness or wit or wisdom. No; it was received because he was thought to be incarnate God—immaculate of birth, a sacrifice for man. A halo of all the mysteries and wonders of the world was about him, and men's spirits rose and stood on tiptoe in rapture and fear. So it ever was, and so it always will be. A religion which does not explain the mazes of our present life, which does not carry with it the awful sanctions of the future, cannot live or be of use in the world.

Arnold and Lowell covered more ground than almost any of their compeers. Yet probably neither of them did the supreme work he dreamed of doing—the one thing worth while. Of all their varied work, perhaps Arnold's poetry will come to stand highest in the estimation of mankind.

THE OLD NEW-ENGLANDERS AND THE REST OF US

TACITUS said of the Greeks that they only praised their own achievements. The New-Englanders learned this trick early and practised it late. They stood shoulder to shoulder and cried each other up. Like Molière's learned ladies, they decided that no one should have any wit but themselves and their friends. Scattered over our country, they took with them, wherever they went, the totems of their tribe, and set them up to be worshipped by the outer barbarians. They had some excuse for this, because they, of all Americans, did acknowledge some sort of intellectual weights and measures. But it was inevitable, in the end, that the rule of their gods should be challenged, their sanctity questioned. Bullied out of obedience, some of us are ready to say that the New England writers were respectable people who did good in their day, but that in the consideration of universal literature they are not much, and that even in the consideration of American literature they are second-rate.

The thing that separates the literature of New England from that of the rest of the country is its

ingrained didactic tendency. It is the outcome of centuries of sermonizing. The Puritan believed he had a monopoly of goodness, which he was willing to dispense to the rest of the world for a consideration. Now all great art is in its effect moral. Great beauty harmonizes and inspires the mind. Great humour exposes the hypocrisies and corruptions of mankind, and draws us toward sanity and health. Profound metaphysical thought, winging along the frontiers of the unknown, lifts us above the petty concerns of life, its injustices and disappointments. Literature which runs counter to the conventional ideas of morality is often the most moral of all. Byron's *Vision of Judgment*, with its irreverence, almost blasphemy, is moral because like a blaze of lightning it burned up the foul airs of its time. Burns's *Jolly Beggars* is as moral as the *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin* of the Persian king. Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* is moral, for it is a protest against sickly sentimentalism and prurient thought. There is Paganism in plenty in the *Iliad*, but has the modern world produced anything more essentially noble than the life and doom of Achilles? Nay, the *Bacchanals* of Euripides is moral, though it is a hymn to intoxication.

Moral ideas come nearest to us when embodied in the forms of creative art. No precept can equal an example. Instinctively all the races of men have projected their hopes and aspirations, their beliefs, their best and truest being, in the large forms of literature or religion. Rama and the

Pandu brothers, Rustum and Isfendiar, Achilles and Odysseus, Charlemagne and his Paladins, Siegfried and King Arthur, are instances of man's half unconscious shadowing forth of an ideal which may become a model. Of course, accompanying this creative effort there has always been much sermonizing and maxim mongering; but I do not know of any literature where this is not secondary, where it has not been of less educational value than the imitation which the great figures of art have forced upon men.

The failure of the New England writers in creation is due partly to their lack of sympathy with power in all its manifestations, partly to the genuine sincerity with which they held their moral code. It is the shibboleth of recent criticism, that sincerity is a poet's greatest virtue. Rather I should say a splendid insincerity is the germinating kernel of the imagination that creates. It is not to be supposed that Shakespeare held with Falstaff's code of morals and mode of life, or that he approved of Richard or Iago as men and citizens. But the joy of imagination was on him, and he thought himself into their skins and delighted in the exhibition of their powers.

The New England writers could not do this. They were compelled by the nature of their minds to import a moral meaning into, or allegorize a moral lesson out of, everything they touched. Once, indeed, Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter* came near giving us a genuine tragedy. His theme is only a variation of the usual French

theme of three—husband, lover, and wife; but the situations are developed with remarkable skill, and the style, if a little prettified, is noble. The test of a tragic piece of work, however, is this: Does it leave us dull, depressed, dispirited, convinced that human life is a hideous mistake, or does it ring in our ears like the sound of a trumpet, does it tone our nerves like mountain air, does it make us feel that we are giants and able to contend against Fate itself? All the really great tragedies of the world affect us in the last-named ways; even an almost inhuman work like *Wuthering Heights* does so; but, unless I greatly err, *The Scarlet Letter*, like the tragic pieces of the Russian novelists, leaves us in dull despair.

In everything but supreme creative force and supreme technical gift, the literature of New England is most satisfactory. It is thoroughly set up and equipped in all its branches. It has a genuinely great metaphysician in Jonathan Edwards, and a long roll of poets, essayists, and historians. And who can doubt that these were men of genius? If they could only have let themselves go—if they had only given their imaginations a loose rein into all the fields of life—they might have been great creators. If they had only wooed Beauty more unreservedly they might have been great technicians. As it is, two of the most solemn of them, Emerson and Bryant, have flashes of revealing light. But such flashes are intermittent with them, and more like phosphorescence than fire. Altogether, I should hesitate to

place any of the New Englanders among the purple-wearers of mankind.

Has America produced any such inheritors of the purple line? I think it has. I think the world has instinctively selected two or three of our men for its real regard, while it has only yielded a cold admiration to the New England contingent.

There is Cooper, whose work is known and valued all over the civilized world. His *Spy* is a great novel. The character of Washington—perhaps the most difficult to handle of all historic figures—is given with wonderful dramatic effect, far surpassing, I think, Thackeray's treatment in *The Virginians*. Cooper was the first to extend the domain of the novelist over the ocean, and his set of sea tales, in their combined rendering of elemental and human action, is hardly yet equalled. But of course his great work is his series of pioneer stories. The forest life of America, its most wonderful phase, starts from his broad canvases. Nobody admires Parkman more than I do. He tells the tale of the great American adventurers with fire and enthusiasm. But imagination is better than fact. The whole forest life,—nature and man, the shadowy woods, the rolling streams, the broad lakes, the hunt, the trail, the camp-fire, the Indian habitat, the warfare of white and brown, of French and English,—is in the novelist rather than the historian. Cooper's Indians have been objected to as idealized. They are probably no more idealized than the heroes of Homer or the Highlanders of Scott. And Leatherstocking is

one of the great figures of prose fiction. Cooper has terrible faults. His plots are often mechanical to a degree; his minor characters are often irritating in their inanity or absurdity; his conversations are almost always stilted and unnatural. But his broad pictures of forest and lake and prairie stamp themselves on our minds. It is the epic of the making of an empire, the disappearance of a race, which we follow in his books.

At the right and left hand of Cooper, I should place Brockden Brown and Herman Melville. Brown, a miracle of nature, a Quaker novelist, fascinated Shelley and was evidently deeply studied by Poe. In force of imagination, vividness of weird incident, intensity of picture, unshrinking realism, he is at least the equal of Hawthorne. But human nature is still further withdrawn from the normal in him than in the New England romance writer. If Hawthorne's world is a moonlight one, his is only lit by jagged flashes of lightning. Herman Melville has given us at least two immortal books. *Moby Dick* is in some sense the greatest sea narrative ever written; but it is so Byronic, so strained and singular in its passion and theme, that only a recurrence of morbid conditions of human nature could bring it into fashion. *Typee*, however, is sunny and graceful and beautiful and irresponsible, and must always charm.

Irving is the second name on our list which the world has accepted at something like its real value. What ease of polished prose is his! What kindly,

tolerant outlook on human life; what vivifying spell in his lightest touch! His English sketches had a great effect on Dickens, but they are themselves derivative from Addison and Steele. But most of his group of Hudson River stories are as original as they are great. Imagination, humour, creative force,—all the ingredients of lasting work are in them, and the world has pretty well learned them by heart.

The case of Whitman *vs.* the Traditional Muse is yet unadjudged. If it were merely a matter of rhyme or metre, I see no reason why any poet should not be allowed to please himself. There are many national verse forms which are as queer to our eyes and ears as any in Whitman. There is plenty of rhythm in Whitman's verse, as there is in some of the Bible books or in Blake's chants. But the matter of Whitman's poetry is undefined and unformed. He seems to me one who has tried to get the whole universe into his brain, and in a manner has succeeded, only it has turned back into chaos. Everything is fluid in him—with here and there *disjecta membra* of human limbs, trunks of trees, sunsets, moral virtues, and so forth, calmly floating about. But occasionally some form of beauty or power heaves into sight, and once or twice the whole business coalesces and hardens into something new and strange and fine.

In discussing Poe, I wish to put aside for the nonce the question of his intellectual power. I think I have probably read as much metaphysic and science as most of the critics who decry Poe

as a cheat and charlatan. To me he seems a great thinker, an intellect lucid and far darting. He resembles, indeed, those early Greek or Hindu philosophers whose guesses and intuitions have never been excelled for profundity. But let that pass. I wish to concentrate my attention on him as a technician. Poe is the great tone master of modern literature. Tone in literature is a certain blending of the intellectual and the sensuous for a predetermined effect. It requires, perhaps, a touch of morbidity of temperament to produce it, for everything contrary or extraneous to the desired effect must be shut out. Most of the epics and great works of prose fiction have no trace of tone. They are too wide-reaching, their contents are too various, to be keyed to one single note or harmonized to one tune. The drama, the lyric, and the prose story are the regions of tone. Even in these, greatness is possible without it. *Hamlet* begins with a tone picture hardly equalled even in Shakespeare,—the platform at Elsinore, the biting coldness of the night, the sentinels in their cloaks, the distant noise of the king's revel, and then—the Ghost. But as the play goes on, its intellectual and emotional content bursts the sensuous framework, and tone disappears. With, of course, other immense inferiorities, Poe cannot come into comparison with Shakespeare in variety of tone. Shakespeare's different pieces are keyed to all the notes of colour, from ebon black to the purest gold of sunlight. Poe keeps in the main to the dark side of the spectrum. But within his

range there are great differences in shade and always absolute certainty of effect. Consider the varieties of tone in the grave sombre colours of *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the restless brilliancy of *The Masque of the Red Death*, and the sober ordered daylight of *Landor's Cottage*; or the range between the intangible shadows of *Ulalume*, the rich gloom of *The Raven*, and the faceted sparkle of *The Haunted Palace*. As the modern world of letters has mainly gone to Keats to learn style—the perfection of word and phrasing,—so it has gone to Poe to learn tone, the truths of keeping an atmosphere in composition.

Poe did not set himself to write copy-book maxims of morality, but the total effect of his work is that of loftiness and nobility. His men are brave and his women are pure. He is the least vulgar of mortals. Perhaps, if books have any effect at all, his tend to make men too truthful, too sensitive, too high-minded.

THE TWO WORLDS

HAS anyone ever made a census of the beings born of words—counted the population of that kingdom of the imagination which hovers above our heads in air, or invisibly occupies the spaces of the earth? A “Who’s Who” of the gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines, villains and merry-men of literature, would be a huge affair. All the Mythological Dictionaries, all the lists of folk-lore creations, would have to be emptied into it. All the inhabitants of Playland and Poemland and Novelland would have to be mustered and marshalled in its pages. To the ordinary well-read man, the world of fiction is like the sky on a clear night. A few thousand bright stars are visible, while countless others are unseen or show only in the congregated gleam of the Milky Way.

One curious result of such an enumeration would be to reveal that in some directions the people of fancy overcount reality. It is safe to say that there are two thousand novels published and plays brought out in England every year. It is also reasonable to estimate that each one of these productions contains, on an average, two members of the nobility among its characters. This would be more than ten times the membership of the

House of Lords. And as the fictive creation of titles has been going on for generations, the actual holders of hereditary honours in England must have been overwritten many hundred times deep. England would have to be enlarged to the size of Africa, to hold all the estates the wizards of the pen have crowded into it. And the great poets, artists, soldiers, statesmen, and financiers who have been projected by the literary imagination would make a population for a considerable city. The shining ones of life are the favourites of fiction, and every real personage of this kind must go attended by a crowd of airy phantoms of himself, whereas the average or less than average citizen has not one chance in ten thousand of being confronted by his ghost-like similar.

It is impossible really to separate the creations of the Historical Muse from those of her more imaginative sisters. Clio wears the same clothes and uses the same instrument of expression as Melpomene or Erato. They all depend on words to convince or inspire mankind. We say, indeed, that history is true and literature is fiction; but in the first place this is a large and unestablished claim; and in the second place, literature, being as a rule wrought by the greater hands, makes a deeper and more lasting impression on us. Achilles is more dazzlingly splendid than Alexander; Trimalchio is more real than Tiberius. But the two forms of human record are everlastingly confused. Fiction deals largely with the personages and facts of history, and history borrows the

interpretive and dramatic devices of literature. Historic evidence, indeed, is hardly more than a jest. That certain incidents occurred and certain people lived in the past is sure; but the causes and details of those incidents and the motives and personalities of those actors are wrapped in obscurity and open to the interpretation of every new historian.

Literature is defined as an imitation of life, and its world is usually conceived as a sort of a mirage of reality. In recent times, the nearer it can get to the prose and placidness of ordinary life, the better it is thought to succeed. But even in the hands of the most accomplished apostle of *ennui*, literature, by reason of its necessary concentration and selectiveness, is different from life. It is life reflected in the medium of a single artist's brain—coloured by his moods, changed by his passions and prejudices, charged with the impressions of all he has learned of the past, imitative of the work of preceding artists. Books beget books, and characters create characters. The Poor Parson in Chaucer, Fielding's Parson Adams, the Vicar of Wakefield, My Uncle Toby, Dominie Sampson, and Mr. Pickwick are in lineal descent. No two writers give us the report of the same life in the same way. French life as depicted by Hugo and Dumas is a contradiction, a destroying contrast. The New England scenes of Hawthorne and of Mrs. Freeman are equally things apart. Literature surely depends more upon the author's gift of vision, his inner personality, and his skill in

language, than it does upon the raw materials of nature and humanity upon which he works. Real life, indeed, is hardly more than the peg upon which he hangs the draperies of his thought.

It follows that the laws of real life are inapplicable to literature. I do not mean by "laws" the actual possibilities and certain consequences of human action,—though literature can transgress those also,—but the rules and conventions of good behaviour. Spenser passes for a moral poet, but he draws the picture of a sensual paradise which if it could be realized in our midst would be shut up by the police. Sophocles is the most noble-minded of the Greeks, but in his *Œdipus* he tells a story so shocking that it could hardly be whispered about in ordinary conversation. The peculiar sphere of literature, indeed, is the *outré*, the violent, the exceptional, the unrestrained. It deals by preference with passions, vices, crimes, which we try to restrain in real life. And it pictures these in the most vivid way, isolating and toning up to them; whereas in life they are so largely diluted with commonplace as to be hardly noticed. Of course, literature also deals with the noble and the virtuous side of life, and perhaps this side is the corrective of the other. But if it obeyed the laws we draw up to guide life, it would deal with good alone. Yet in the larger view I do not believe its exploitation of evil does any harm. An imaginative boy will go through a course of reading in English literature,—will follow the fortunes of the rakes and *roués* of Elizabethan and Restoration comedy,

will take purses with Claude Duval and gallop the roads with Dick Turpin,—and come through the ordeal more pure and honest than an unlettered youth who has known only the experiences of practical life. The imaginative boy has common sense. He does not take the apparitions of fancy for the solid appearances of the world. We all need stimulus and intoxication, and when we can get these things from literature we can largely dispense with them in life. The whole domain of fairy-tale, folk-lore, mythological legend, and *outré* invention, is a play or game of mankind by which it tries to divert its mind from its cares and dulnesses. It is a make-believe by which it seeks to impose on its own credulity an impossible ideal of its own power and achievements.

Yet the action and reaction of life and literature are as sure as the tides. Sometimes life, by means of dæmonically gifted personages or overwhelming successions or combinations of events, draws literature after it,—makes poets its slavish and usually insignificant copyists. Sometimes great figures, tremendous actions, are projected, “all made out of the Carver’s brain,” and influence men at once or perennially. Men like Pericles, or Augustus, or Louis XIV. impose themselves on literature, dictate the tastes and forms which the artists must follow. Women like Cleopatra, or Mary Queen of Scots, carry after them a still longer train of poet-worshippers. Great events like the Persian War, the conquests of Cæsar, or the Crucifixion, employ the pens of multitudes.

On the other hand, great embodiments of humanity risen from some unknown depth of dreaming thought—Job, Prometheus, Don Quixote, Hamlet, to name no others,—create action in their turn, become bone of the bone, flesh of the flesh of the world. *Werther*, a projection of Goethe's personality, swept half Germany off its feet by its revolt and sentimentality. And it is impossible to say how much the spirit of Napoleon, and hence the fates of nations, was influenced by Macpherson's *Ossian*. Of course, if we accept the dictum, which is at the root of modern science and philosophy, that "there is nothing in the mind but what the senses put there," we must refer the creations of the mind back to experience, and so make literature and life one. But the dictum is not true. The eternal laws of thought are in the mind, and the germs of origination and difference. If this were not so, all minds would be pretty much alike; for they all go through pretty much the same experience.

Is literature, then, a creation? M. Rodin, the great French sculptor—I do not say realistic sculptor, for he is too universal for such a label—brushes the idea aside with the remark that "none but fools imagine we create." Is that so? There is M. Rodin's Balzac. Without denying its power, all opinion asserts that the statue is not like Balzac or anybody else. For any resemblance to reality, M. Rodin might just as well have carved a chimera or a snark. If, then, a man produces something which was never in the world before, and

which but for him would never have existed, is it not very near to our idea of creation? Art springs from the marriage of experience and revery. It is true that if a man goes on copying and reproducing the work of past artists, his efforts will lack that freshness and newness which are the signs of creative work. But he will also lose this freshness and newness if he copies, without inspiration, the frail, dull figures of humanity. To my mind, M. Rodin's statues are the most ideal of modern times—the ones most informed with thought, inspired beyond the semblance of life.

I am disposed to think that the highest kind of creative intellect does not allow itself to be much disturbed by reality. The man himself may be pitchforked into all kinds of action, but he does not take experience greedily or readily. A few forms or movements of life he seizes upon, and with these he retires into his cave, and, brooding over them—aërating them with his own imaginations, twisting and twining them into a thousand shapes—he finally produces the new thing which we recognize as the work of genius. Solitude is the prerequisite for all great work. It is only the warrior who sulks in his tent who can turn the tide of battle with a single shout.

THE GREATEST LITERARY FORM

IT is worth while to repeat, with Aristotle and Lessing, that tragedy is the top achievement of the human intellect. Of course this is not an universal opinion. The Greeks in general seem to have regarded Homer as the norm of literature, and Proclus describes the tragic poets as wandering in intoxicated error from his true path. And Keats says: "The epic is of all the king, round, vast and spanning all like Saturn's ring." But these are enthusiasms. Most critics have agreed with Aristotle, that tragedy contains all that the epic does, in a more concentrated form, and a great deal besides. Perhaps the inevitable dualism of life—the Me and Not-Me—comes out more definitely in the dialogue of tragedy than in any other form of literature. It is remarkable that whereas all the great epic poets have been believers, have accepted the religion or creed of their times and justified the ways of God to man, the greater dramatists, on the other hand, have all given a skeptical or doubtful solution of the problem of existence. Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Tasso—the list is one of unquestioning worshippers. The author of the Book of Job, Æschylus, Shakespeare, Goethe, Molière,—this is just as surely a roll-call of

doubters or deniers. Even Calderon, the poet of Catholicism, in his two greatest plays, forgets his faith in the Cross and the Inquisition, and gives us the inexplicable struggle of thought. A practical explanation of this division of rôles between the two orders of poets lies in the fact that the epic poet deals with the outward world—with bodies and things. Gods, goddesses, angels, and demons with their respective heavens and hells, are a lucky find for him—an extension of his domain. But tragedy deals with the human soul—which is incapable of extension, only capable of division. It does not follow that epic poetry is the most religious or the most profound. It shows God acting on the world only directly; but tragedy shows Him as acting through His enemy—His laws revealed by the very opposition to them.

Aristotle's dictum that tragedy, through fear and pity, effects a purification from such like passions, is one of his dark sayings that compel conjecture. In whom does it effect this purification, and how can pity purify from pity? Thomas Taylor, the translator of Aristotle, is the only one, so far as I know, who decidedly asserts that the purification is not in the spectators. He says tragedy purifies from those perturbations which happen in the fable and are the cause of the unhappy events. This is illuminating night with black smoke. He seems to mean, however, that the play evolves itself through agitation into calm, and conducts the spectator or reader through the same operations. Something like this is Goethe's

view. But most commentators accept the usual view that terror and pity act on like passions. That such is the case, may be doubted. In Gray's phrase, we "may snatch a fearful joy" at times from tragedy, but as a rule the spectator does not feel fear at all—such instances as the women fainting on the appearance of the Furies pursuing Orestes being exceptional; nor is pity aroused to such an extent as would be required for purification. Indeed, I suspect the feeling awakened is more that which Lucretius frankly avows when he says that it is pleasant to stand safely on a cliff and behold a shipwreck.

I think the main causes of our pleasure in tragedy are two: a feeling of admiration for power as it exhibits itself in the unrolling of events, an admiration like that with which we gaze on great destructive exhibitions of natural force such as a thunderstorm or a volcano in action; and, second, the feeling of sympathy and kinship for greatly doing or suffering characters. We feel that we too under like circumstances could oppose ourselves to the whole power of Fate, and equal it, at least, by defying it. Our pleasure in the mere display of power accounts for our tolerance of creations of utter wickedness, but of supreme intellect, such as Richard, or Iago, or Mephistopheles; and our feeling of kinship with extreme nobleness or greatness of character, caught in the toils of chance or design, explains our love for Hamlet and Othello. They give us a better opinion of ourselves. Energy triumphant in evil appeals to us, and good

supreme in defeat gives us profound joy. Only weakness, moral or intellectual, repels us, and is unfitted for tragic representation.

Hamlet is not weak in any sense. He does everything, sooner or later, which could be expected of a tragic hero. But his intellect is so vast that it is like illimitable space, where there can be no motion, because an object can never get farther from the centre or nearer to the circumference. In comparison, Faust is a weak and ignoble creation, bent on low aims and always led by the nose. I suppose there is no educated man who has not at some time imagined himself a Hamlet, but I never heard of anyone who wanted to be Faust, in spite of the youth, the riches, and the "good fortunes" of the German Doctor. The hypocritical pretence of a love for humanity, by which he evades just retribution in the end, is of a piece with the rest of his character. Had he paid his debt to the devil like a gentleman, as did Marlowe's Faustus and Molière's Don Juan, we might have some respect for him. As it is, he is a mere principle of gravitation holding together the incoherent atoms of a chaotic poem. The work lives by reason of the beauty of its central episode, the profoundly conceived character of Mephistopheles, and the wit, poetry, and philosophy with which it overflows. As a complete work of art, it has no claim to rank with the Greek tragedies or with Shakespeare; and to place it beside the *Divine Comedy*, as some have done, is to equal a nebulae with a finished system of stars.

126 The Greatest Literary Form

The heroes of Greek tragedy were personalities; those of Shakespeare are persons. In the Greek conception, the abstract idea is predominant; in Shakespeare, the concrete individual. Antigone or Electra is universal girlhood placed in certain predicaments; Cordelia and Desdemona are particular women. Orestes is the ordinary filial human being in a most terrible position; Hamlet is original, and unlike any other mortal. The collision with the Greeks is sharper and more definite. It does not soften itself with humour or human peculiarities. Its effect is more tremendous and instantaneous, but not so penetrating. It is a contradiction of abstract ideas that must destroy each other.

The first condition under which we can take pleasure in the exhibition of tragic force is that we, the spectators, shall be safe from it. It follows that the more remote and ideal the presentations are, the better. Euripides brought tragedy down to earth, and his audiences seem to have felt that they were involved in the issues he exhibited—that they were being sermonized and lectured; and they disliked him accordingly. Ibsen, a modern Euripides, has done the same thing. We are willing to stand at gaze for the shafts of satire and laughter; but tragedy is too serious a business to be brought home to our hearths and hearts. In true tragedy, hell opens at every footstep, and we can stand this only when it is sufficiently removed from us to be harmless. We do not domesticate a tiger, or build our houses over an active volcano.

Ibsen depicts the Furies moving among the trivialities and commonplaces of contemporary life. It is no answer to say that this is true, that the Furies do wreath their snakes in town houses and villas. Aristotle's law is absolute, that a possible improbability is a better subject for tragedy than an improbable fact. Besides, there is weakness and corruption in every one of Ibsen's characters, and there can consequently not be any effective collision between them. What is the moral of *The Doll's House*? A fool marries an idiot, and they expect perfect happiness. Every character in *Hedda Gabler* is bad—or silly. If they suffer, we say it serves them right and we do not care. Gina in *The Wild Duck* is Ibsen's one rounded piece of humanity. It is a Shakespearian, a Cervantic conception; and her demoniac husband is excellent fooling. But what are they doing among tragic issues? They belong to comedy, and the sentimentalism of the other figures ruins their vraisemblance.

The characters of Victor Hugo's drama resemble those figures which children cut out of coloured paper—white, red, pink, or black. They are disks without projection. They have no bodies and no souls—nothing but attitudes and apparel in abundance. His dramas are probably his poorest works, because they do not contain any of those children or very young people whom he did understand intuitively, and did not have to piece together out of theory.

In spite of literary limitations, I am inclined to

think that Wagner will finally come to stand as the greatest tragic poet of modern times. He seized on a few great myths with a content of mighty virtues and vices, and a consequent struggle which must always shake the human soul. The life he depicts is truth, while Ibsen's life is merely fact, and Hugo's mainly phantasy.

English tragedy has not done itself proud in the last century. In spite of Shelley's hazy conception of human nature and his failure in objective speech, the *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci* are the best things it has to show. Byron, with a firmer grasp of fact, is far looser in his use of the drama. His *Manfred* and *Cain* are the origins of the drama of monologue, the parents of a monstrous brood—Bailey's *Festus*, Smith's *Life Drama*, Ibsen's *Brand*, and much of Browning's work. In all these, a single figure destroys himself from within; with no adequate collision from without. Like all other literary forms, tragedy has fallen into hotchpot in the novel. Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* and E. Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* are perhaps its best performances in the new mixture. The woman's piece is stern and elemental enough, but Hawthorne prettifies and sophisticates a good deal. *The Scarlet Letter*, a twilight melodrama, is hardly universal. All the environment and special pathology of Puritan life must be understood before it convinces. Properties and surroundings are indeed of small account in real tragedy. Dumas's requisites—a table, two chairs, two people, and a passion—are enough for it. The

late Robert Louis Stevenson had, I apprehend, a genuine tragic gift. He understood the transformations of character—the heights and depths of human nature, its Himalayas by the Indian Seas—better than most moderns. But he gave himself up to the cultivation of style, as the Dutch did to their passion for tulips; and perhaps with the same result.

Ibsen is to be thanked for one achievement: he has compelled the attention of the reading public to plays. Why or when the custom of reading plays fell into disuse, is hard to state. In the last century they were universally read. But I suppose the ease of having everything spelled out—the scenery, character, incident—by the novel, has indisposed the average mind for anything that requires intellectual effort and alertness. But the literary form which projects an action roundly, vividly, instantaneously, so that it may show as a whole yet be of polished beauty in its details, is too valuable to be lightly cast aside. It is absolutely immaterial to a play as a piece of literature whether it has been presented on the stage or not. The Greek tragedies are no longer given, and only a few of Shakespeare's pieces,—but that does not interfere with our enjoyment of them; and a good play that has never seen the boards ought to have an equal chance with readers with a new novel. It is necessary, of course, that dramatic work should conform to dramatic conditions, which for the most part are theatric conditions also. An interminable work, for instance, like Taylor's

Philip van Artevelde, which runs on forever, ought not to call itself a play. And Mr. Swinburne's dramas err against all dramatic construction and human reason, in their long speeches. We can imagine that the characters themselves only listen to each other by a sort of tacit convention that each one is to have his own innings,—though some of them, indeed, don't even allow this, but carry their bat out. Subject, therefore, to reason, the rescue of the play, and especially tragedy, as a literary form, is the most important art movement that can be undertaken.

ON COMEDY

ONE cause of the decline of comedy is the squeamishness of modern manners, which will not permit us to present things in their actuality, but requires a decent veil of words thrown over character and incident. A novel may hint at an occurrence, or describe it by periphrasis, or by its effect; but in comedy the thing itself must happen visibly. A novel can write all around a character—describe his manners and conversation and walk; a comedy must set him up on two legs and let him introduce himself. If a character is brutal or vulgar or unseemly, all this must come out in comedy; in a novel it can be glossed over. Nay, more: in a comedy the whole character has to be concentrated into a few speeches. It is necessary, therefore, for it to exaggerate all salencies, and to give in one brief display all the characteristics which a human being would exhibit in a lifetime. And as comedy finds its subjects among the lighter follies and vices of mankind, this essential extract is found too strong for modern taste.

If the aim of tragedy is to produce pleasure by the display of great forces warring against restraint, the business of comedy is to give happiness by the

show of unfettered freedom. It is like the Roman Saturnalia, and in it we slaves of nature or of each other may fling our chains away and flout our masters and defy our fate. The comedy of Aristophanes turns the world upside down, sets low what is high and high what is low. The comedy of Menander, Terence, and Plautus mocks all the settled order and proverbial wisdom of life. It apotheosizes the spendthrift and the thievish servant and the girl of easy virtue. Goldsmith and Sheridan make animal spirits and a happy-go-lucky disposition the choicest gifts of Fate. At Molière's command all men drop their masks, and their pretensions and solemn absurdities shrivel in his flickering smile. Shakespeare alone, from the dark materials of the earth, builds a place of refuge and escape,—reveals the vision of a sweeter, merrier world. All alike, however, free us momentarily from our pain and *ennui*.

Society is perpetually in danger of being stiffened by formulas, dulled with wisdom, made vile by virtue or cruel by common sense. One good custom can corrupt a world. It is a healthy instinct, therefore, which in all times and among all races has allowed the greatest licence to the jester. He has to wear his cap and bells, and submit to humiliations; but these accepted, he may say what he pleases. It seems, though I believe it is an obscure point, that there were some penalties attached to the acceptance of a comic chorus on the Athenian stage. Aristophanes brought out his first two plays under an assumed name, and hesitated

before coming forward under his own. Once he undertook the business, however, he was immune from consequences. The very notion of comedy, therefore, is licence. To attempt to make it decent and decorous is to wrest it from its purpose.

Charles Lamb's defence of the comedians of the Restoration is entirely just, though he hardly took the most logical ground. Congreve and his successors were within their rights. The vices they satirized existed in shameless abandon, and their gay and good-humoured presentation of them probably did more good than a legal indictment and a hanging judge. Thackeray, in one of the most amazing pieces of criticism ever penned, dismisses Congreve with angry scorn. The sordid world of Thackeray is to my mind more horrible than the lewd world of Congreve. Congreve's is at least gay and brilliant, while Thackeray's includes all that is bad in the older one, and has depths of squalid abasement of soul which Congreve could not have conceived. It does not mend matters that the novelist pops now and then upon the scene to read a lesson to us on his misguided creations. He only spoils the illusion thereby, and does not redeem the impression. I think it is hardly disputable that a young man or woman, unused to life or literature, would get a worse opinion of humanity from Thackeray than from Congreve. I do not object to Thackeray. He was right to paint what he saw,—but he had no call to speak with contempt of a man who was his master in almost every respect. Of course, as is the case

in Wycherly, a comic writer may mistake brutality and filth for wit and fun,—but when Wycherly is brutal he ceases to be comic. The display of nakedness, except with the excuse of passion or beauty or humour, is a crime; and sniggering suggestiveness is an unpardonable sin.

Why, indeed, should we make fish of one commandment and fowl of another? “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s goods” is a canon, as well as “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Nobody objected to Molière’s *Avare*, but when he brought out his *School for Wives* all Paris stuffed its fingers in its ears. Love is the universal theme. It is the salt which keeps literature fresh. Comedy cannot do without it, but must treat it in the comic spirit. It has its lofty heights in *Romeo and Juliet* or *Tristan and Isolde*, and it has its ludicrous depths in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* or *Tristram Shandy*. It is, in fact, too strong a passion to allow to rage unlaughed at. As has been said, there is nothing so serious as lust. Treat the passion always *en haut*, and there would be no living in the world. With one consent, society has always tried to drive the comic writers from this subject; and with one consent the comic writers have refused to give it up. There have been endless attempts to bring in sentimental comedy, lachrymose comedy, problematical comedy,—but genuine comedy, ludicrous comedy, has always rallied and retained the field.

The liberation of the intellect from all laws or bonds is best shown in the earth-upsetting comedy of Aristophanes. It is true that he was a conserva-

tive, and tried to restore the o'erblown state to its ancient limits of modesty and order. But his treatment was homœopathic. It was as though we should try to cure a madman by having a circle of maniacs dance about him with antic shout and gesture. It is all, however, a hurly-burly of ideas. Character painting, as we understand it, it hardly attempts, though Cleon and the Sausage-Seller are sketched with some fulness. Aristophanes' superb wit and poetry and thought keep his work from becoming travesty, but it is the parent of all succeeding travesty.

The comedy of Molière is the central comedy of the world. It resumes into itself all the *genres* of Menander and Plautus, as well as those of Ben Jonson, Congreve, and Sheridan. Even the fixed types of Italian comedy appear in it. Molière was the composite smile of mankind. His comedy ranges from the clown and horse-collar stage to the pensive mockery of the profoundest philosophy. He is always the defeated idealist who tortures himself by shattering the illusions which are dearest to his soul. He loves men and women with all his heart, and no one has exhibited them more naked and unadorned. His *Alceste* is as ridiculous as *Don Quixote*, and as noble. It is easy to satirize vice, to write with burning indignation; but to show the utter folly and futility of human life, and yet to make it lovable and desirable, was reserved for Molière alone. It is fortunate that Louis XIV. was more polite than penetrating. *Tartuffe* was a real blow to the *ancien régime*, and

the scene between Don Juan and the Beggar was perhaps the first note of the French Revolution.

Shakespeare's comedy is unique, though there is a trace of its charm in Calderon, and Alfred de Musset has given us a brilliant though shallow imitation of it. Shakespeare is the idealist who succeeds. His comedy is the one art-work of the world which can bestow absolute happiness; and this not once or occasionally, but again and again with unstaled liberality. It is the true Fountain of Youth—the Age of Gold done into words. Shakespeare may almost be said to have created woman. Nowhere else does she exist in such bloom and perfume as in his comedy. Falstaff stands outside of the magic circle. He is Shakespeare's greatest contribution to ordinary comedy—the comedy such as other men can write. Lacking Falstaff, however, we would still have Sancho Panza; but lacking Rosalind, Viola, Beatrice, Imogen, Perdita, Miranda, Sir Toby, Malvolio, Dogberry, Bottom, lacking Illyria, the Garden at Belmont, the forest of Arden, Prospero's enchanted isle, the Athenian glades,—lacking these, what would there be in art to compensate us?

Hazlitt preferred Congreve's comedy to Shakespeare's. It was an odd taste; but after Shakespeare, Congreve is, I think, the best English prose writer—best, not greatest, of course. For greatness there is required an intellectual and spiritual equipment that Congreve did not have. Yet the great prose writers, his compeers and successors, Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Johnson, seem to have

looked upon him with a species of awe. His Valentine and Angelica, Mirabel and Millamant, are poor relations of Benedict and Beatrice, Orlando and Rosalind, in point of character, but they have an equal estate of wit, and, what is more, a gift of speech so mysterious in its colloquial ease, its polished brilliance, that no one since has found its secret.

When we turn to America for comedy, it is the snakes in Iceland over again. Americans have a credit for humour, but our humour which gets into print is very pale and mild beside the broad and full-blooded mirth of other nations. Like the gentleman in Goldsmith, we hate what is low, and, though we are obligated to dance a bear, our bear dances only to the genteelest of tunes. We treat each other as if we had just graduated from a young ladies' boarding-school, or were possible contributors to some Ladies' Journal. We will not see, at least in literature, that there is a coarse and animal side to life, and that for mere relief we must give it vent in speech if not in act. Abraham Lincoln knew this necessity of human nature, and kept himself up through the deadliest ordeals by lapses into the broadest fun. It is impossible to doubt that coarseness exists in our life, that Squire Westerns, and Wives of Bath, and Peachums, and Lockits, live in our midst.

To a certain extent, the same prudery obtains in modern English literature. But Dickens was deliciously "low," Thackeray's books are one long rogues' gallery, and Stevenson went in for ferocity

with a vigour that alienated his female constituency. I hardly know, however, where to look for coarseness or raciness in American literature. Mr. Howells's people are all respectable and genteel. Mr. James's are genteel, if they are not respectable. Mark Twain's Mississippi roustabouts never say anything which would bring a blush to the cheek of modesty. Bret Harte's heroes have the manners of grand opera. It is no better—or worse—if one goes backward. Dr. Holmes, a delicate humourist, seemed born to preach the propaganda of the clean shirt. There is a precious spark or two of vulgarity in Irving, but it soon dies away into the general decency. Cooper's heroes are moral prize-winners. Gazing on all this wide expanse of clean linen and well-washed humanity, the soul aches for a little dirt.

Is there no material for real comedy among us? Don't our politicians bribe and betray? Don't our financiers bubble the community? Don't rich girls elope with coachmen? Are there no scandals in the upper circles? By the mass, no,—if we may trust our books. Or if any of these things occur, they are treated with lamentation and tears, instead of with the ironic smile of the earth spirit which is comedy. It is a total misconception of genius to suppose that it will give us the highest if we forbid it to deal with the lowest. Chaucer's Wife of Bath is the corollary of the Prioress; Falstaff is the necessary foil for Rosalind and Imogen. The rankness of the *Decameron* was necessary to grow the story of the Falcon, the

most perfect brief narrative in literature. If we restrict our artists to the middling, we must expect middling results. And mediocrity, hateful to God and men and columns, is what we have mainly got.

THE NOVEL AND THE PLAY

THE most aggravating of all critics is the critic who asserts and gives no reasons. A recent writer tells us that the novel is a finer art-form than the play, and practically the only reason he offers to back his opinion is that the first form is contemporary and the second archaic. Archaic! What great art has not been archaic at the time of its production? Gray remarks, in one of his letters, that the language of poetry is never the language of the age or of common life. Shakespeare's speech was undoubtedly strange to the Elizabethans. The "well-languaged Daniel" was the scholarly type of that day, and Daniel is as modern as Sir Edwin Arnold. The same is true of thought and character. If either is great, it cannot possibly conform to accepted conventions. What can we suppose that even the Athenians made of the Prometheus or the Agamemnon or the Persian ghost of Æschylus? As we can see in Aristophanes, these were rather musty fables to them. The display of the Panathenaic festival, or the riot of the Eleusinian mysteries, was much more to their minds. Alleyne, the theatrical manager of Shakespeare's time, has left it on record that he made the greater part of his fortune by showing bears.

The Spaniards tolerated Calderon as an appanage of the Inquisition, but their real joy was in the burning of heretics. The *auto-da-fé* was doubtless to them a sweet contemporary thing. Goethe and Schiller, by the expenditure of infinite labour, built up a theatre in Weimar. They forced great tragedy and comedy, the use of verse and the right reading of it, down the German throat. But was their patient grateful to them? Not a bit. Goethe was forced to resign the directorship of the theatre by a performing dog.

I hope the writer referred to will pardon me if I offer him some reasons why the novel *might* be a finer art than the play. In the first place, it has a larger canvas. The average novel has from five to ten times more words in it than the average play. If there is anything in big battalions, Xerxes ought always to overwhelm Leonidas. In the second place, the novel, though a hybrid, may possibly inherit the qualities of its various ancestors. It may have the pure emotional gush of the lyric, the orbicular sweep of the epic, the intensity of the drama. In the third place, it is gifted with omniscience, a power which the epic shares with it, but which is denied to other art forms. In the fourth place, it can perform the offices of the scene-painter, the actor, the gas-man, the usher in the body of the theatre, and the critic in the next day's print. And lastly, it requires no such attention on the part of the reader as does the more abstract form of the play, which, especially if written in verse, is the most concentrated work of

the human mind. In reading a novel, we sit at feast like a Persian King, and have one servant to cut our food, another to put it in our mouths, and a third to work our jaws for us.

I am not mocking. These advantages the novel possesses, and they in great part account for its popularity. But for the final result of greatness they are fallacious and break down. The immense expenditure of words in a novel is a solution of continuity and defeats the purpose of an art-work to grasp and body forth a definite conception. Each tidal wave of words washes out the record of its predecessor. And the mixture of forms in the novel is an element of weakness rather than of strength. An *olla-podrida* is neither as good for the digestion nor as tempting to the palate as a course dinner where the flavour of every dish is conserved. And the all-embracing view of the novelist carries with it a quality of vagueness, so much so that the epistolary and biographical forms of the novel, in which this power is resigned, are perhaps the most vivid and intense. And the combination of services which the novelist offers to perform for us tends to distraction; it is ruinous to total effect. The actors get in the way of the plot, the scene-painting interferes with the dialogue and the lyrical or didactic effusions of the author in person spoil the illusion. Most serious of all, the ease with which a novel can be read weakens the mind. A good play, though so much shorter than a novel, demands a far greater amount of attention, and so tends to fasten itself upon the brain.

In general, the question between the play and the novel is a question of law or liberty, discipline or license. I like to image the play as a troop of Spanish *caballeros* or *conquistadores*, mounted on the steeds of inspiration, armoured with verse, armed with thought, and moving in instinctive obedience to one will; while the novel is a vast, lawless, disorganized mass of Mexican or Inca barbarians, howling and hurling itself on the compact body of iron-clad men. The mob may submerge the few for a time, but it must eventually be beaten back and reduced to submission and slavery.

We learn from the article already cited that the play tends to base itself on the novel. Certainly. It has always done so. The plays of the Greek tragedians were based on the cyclic poems which were the novels of antiquity, and which have perished. Shakespeare and his circle based their art on Italian *novella*, many of which were as good fiction as is written today. The order of life is for the soul to ascend from the body. The instinct of mankind is not satisfied until the pure kernel of an art-work is disengaged from its mixed and impure mass of wrappings and enfoldments.

Though the writer I am considering regards the novel as a finer art-form than the play, he does not assert that his greatest typical novelist is superior to the typical dramatist. He only insists on a certain equality between the two. He is willing to concede that Shakespeare was a respectable sort of a person who did good in his day, though he is

hardly up to our modern standards of democratic art. Personally, I feel disposed to light a hecatomb of expiation to Shakespeare for bringing him, even for defence, into competition with Balzac. But this is a wrong feeling. Shakespeare must stand his trial like any other author. Every generation summons the favourites of the past to the bar of its opinion, questions them as to their birth and condition and present means of livelihood, and judges and sentences them after its own sweet will, —judging itself at the same operation. And this is necessary and right. Literature in mortmain, literature held in the dead hand, is as dangerous as literature of new-born bounce and bluster. So let us on to the comparison.

Those who have done me the honour to read my notes on literature published in *The Dial* will not suspect me of holding a brief for style. Not that I do not in my own mind worship style, but I hold it a result, not a means. I believe it follows the accumulation of thoughts, and the kindling conception of character. But when it so arrives, it is the final stamp of greatness. Now, as the previous writer practically admits, there is in this respect no possible parallel between Shakespeare and Balzac. Balzac in style is plebeian, is home-made, is humdrum. In a nation of graceful writers, he is the dancing bear of prose. Shakespeare, with a great many people, is mainly and above all the master, the magician of words. He may be slightly less clear and faultless than the Greeks, but he is infinitely more gorgeous in colour and

varied in carving,—and there is more of him that is good than there is of all the Greek poets put together. This matter of wealth of expression in Shakespeare is very little realized. Because each of our greater English poets has some distinctive quality of his own, we are apt to think of them as inferior indeed to Shakespeare, but still to some extent comparable. As far as expression is concerned, they could almost all of them be quarried out of Shakespeare. The peak of Teneriffe is a striking enough object in its isolation, but transport it to the Andes or the Himalayas and it would sink to a mole-hill lost in the vastnesses about it. The matter of expression, therefore, to many people the most important of all, is settled for Shakespeare against Balzac.

Most great poets are philosophers as well. They justify the ways of God to man, or defend the ways of man to God. Dante is the final expression of the Catholicism of the Fathers; Calderon of the Catholicism of the Inquisition; Milton of Calvinism. Goethe gave full literary form to the new scientific method and thought of Bacon and Franklin. His philosophy is the philosophy of egotism and utility. It must be admitted that when we come to assess the philosophy of Shakespeare, it is difficult to put one's hand on his central thought. He unquestionably imbibed Pyrrhonism from Montaigne, and Pyrrhonism is not constructive. But he is always thinking of the mighty problems of the soul, of the destinies of humanity. He wanders around the walled chamber of the world

like a mightier Hamlet stabbing the arras everywhere to find out what is beyond. As for Balzac, he can hardly be said to have any thought at all—except the ever-pressing one to get and spend as much money as possible. He wrote in *The Alchemist* about the research into the Absolute. But the Absolute has mighty little to do with the book, which is mainly concerned with the physiognomy of an old house and the fate of a lot of old furniture. When Balzac was well through his *Human Comedy*, he seemed to have felt that there was something wanting to it. He was like the architect who left the staircase out of his house and had to add it on the outside. Balzac wrote *Louis Lambert*. An American editor of this book has read into it marvellous and immeasurable meanings. Any book can become a fetish if one gives one's mind up to it and shuts out all other sources of information. Wilkie Collins, in one of his novels, has an old butler who has made a Bible of *Robinson Crusoe*, and finds in it the most amazing oracles for every event. To me *Louis Lambert* seems a vague rehash of Swedenborgian or Hindu philosophy crammed for the occasion. It utterly lacks the value which hard, original thinking, in whatever method to whatever end, possesses for the human mind. "The Angels are white," says Lambert, and that is about his most valuable contribution to vision or thought. On the whole, then, Balzac as a thinker is of no class whatever; whereas Shakespeare wears the imperial purple.

There remains the presentation of reality by the

two—the reproduction of the aspects of Nature and Art, and the creation of human figures. It may be noted that Shakespeare is almost all out-of-doors; whereas Balzac is ever confined to the rooms of mansion or cottage—to the streets and alleys of towns. Pretty much the whole of Nature is in Shakespeare, but little of the art or handiwork of man. Balzac has a real point of superiority in his architecture and interiors, in which he surpasses everybody. As for the human crowds of the two, what shall I say? In making a comparison here, I can only do like the critic I have been criticizing, offer assertions unbacked by reasons. For it is almost impossible to give reasons for the love or the affections which rise within us. If anyone thinks Eugenie Grandet superior to Juliet, or Modeste Mignon to Imogen; if he likes Cæsar Birrotteau better than Dogberry, and believes old Grandet a better drawn figure than Shylock, why, one can only avert one's eyes, turn down the first crossing, and let him go his misguided way alone. But I think I may assert that Balzac's people are all book folk. They never have had cut the umbilical cord which binds them to the printed page. They do not stray out into real life and become our friends and loves, as do the characters of even lesser men than Shakespeare—Scott and Dickens, for instance. One forgets them in their multitude until one takes the book up again, when the skill, the science, the power of the author bring them back. And another thing may be asserted: they are all small figurines rather than statues.

Balzac never created one of those typical human figures that sum up a race, or resume once for all some abstract quality of life. Molière and Old Dumas are the most Shakespearian souls of France. Alceste and Tartuffe are eternal, and D'Artagnan is the incarnation of the Gallic spirit. He is as much the human symbol of France as Don Quixote is of Spain, Hamlet of Germany, or Robinson Crusoe of England. The typical figure of America is—what shall I say?—David Harum!

A writer may be greater than his age, but, even unconsciously, he is apt to render in his work the lineaments of his time. It is important, then, that the age has something of splendour or greatness to give him. Shakespeare came at the culminating period of the young manhood of the English race. His age was the age of new-born liberty, of revolutions in thought and discovery in the world. It was the age that beat back the Armada. Balzac's age was wearied with the excesses of the Revolution and the Napoleonic era; it was an age of galvanized monarchy and scarecrow empire. It was weak and futile and corrupt. It was the age which fell at Sedan.

Balzac's gift is the modern gift, the scientific gift, the gift of observation. Lord Bacon claimed that his method did away with the necessity of genius in philosophy, that it opened the paths of science to the average intelligence. The same can be said of the scientific method in literature. Anyone can sit down with a note-book before a given quantity of life and record and report it. But the

art so produced is open to the charge which Plato mistakenly brought against all poetry—that it is an imitation of an imitation, reality at third remove. Only where the poet aërates the mass of material given him from without with the inspiration which comes to him within, where he glimpses the universal through the actual, do we get an art product which is valid and valuable for all time.

Perhaps the best way to get at the value of any large art-work is to estimate the sum-total of emotion it produces. What is our final impression of Balzac's work? Do we not feel, when we are done with it, as though we had wakened from an all-night debauch, with a headache and a bad taste in our mouths? Do we not feel as though we had been moving through some mighty marsh clothed with fantastic vegetation, with fetid exhalations rising from it as incense to expiring suns? Do we not say to ourselves, "What is the use? 'Tis a sick and a sordid and a sorry world. Let's cut our throats." On the other hand, what is our legacy of impression from Shakespeare? Is it not that we have been living in a land of sunlight and wooded shade, co-equal heirs with men of mighty ardour and women of holy flame? That thunderstorms might come, indeed, and seem to wreck our world, but that everything would spring fresher from their passing; that our minds would leap to their shock, our muscles brace with their tension, until we would feel that we were seventeen feet high and of Achillean form and visage,—until

we would want to climb to the summits of the earth and shake our fists in the face of fate? Which is the mightier artist,—which is the better gift to mankind?

ORIGINALITY IN LITERATURE

JAMES PAYN, the novelist, told the story of an old English scholar who insisted that all modern literature was contained in Pindar. "What!" asked Mr. Payn, "you don't mean to say that Browning's *Ring and the Book* is in Pindar?" "Yes," said the scholar, "in the highest and truest sense; the *Ring and the Book* is implicit in Pindar."

Without going as far as this, it may be asserted that real originality is a very rare bird. It is not a question of the invention or discovery of new material. The first part of *Faust* is a patchwork of plagiarisms. Almost everything in it is begged, borrowed, or stolen from various sources. Yet it is the most original master-work of modern times. Nor is originality a question of who wrote the first play or novel, or who heralded romanticism or realism. There have probably always been plays and novels; the ancients had their romantics and realists. Æschylus was banished from Athens as a revolutionary, as irreverent to the gods; and wise heads wagged over Euripides' new notions and his break with tradition. Aristophanes and Plautus and Petronius plunged as deep into realism as any modern.

Nor is this thing originality a matter of literary superiority or inferiority. Many writers are great who are not original, and others have a kind of originality who are doubtful in their greatness. Milton and Keats and Tennyson are in the first class, and Blake and Browning in the second. Gray and Arnold and FitzGerald can hardly be called original poets at all; but how great they are!

Nor does the advocacy of isms and causes and movements, all warranted brand-new by their makers, constitute originality. Pretty much all that can affect mankind has been threshed out again and again. There have been Schillers and Shelleys in every age. "I have known twenty leaders of revolt," says the old Cardinal in Browning's play. Nor do new views of morality, pronouncements of independence, make for originality. Moses may break the tablets of the law, but they always come together again,—as Milton's angels, divided by sword or cannon shot, reunite.

Not even temperament and personality, and the manner of looking at things and the style and way of work arising from them, are sure breeders of originality, though they come nearest of all to being so. Human nature is cast in types, and it is doubtful if there are as many distinct varieties as there are letters of the alphabet. Of course, as there are no two leaves in a forest exactly alike, there are minor differences in men and women; and it is to these that literature owes its variety and inexhaustibleness. But they are hardly distinct enough to constitute complete originality.

Milton reproduced Æschylus and Dante; Goethe repeats Menander and Horace and Hafiz.

The truest originality is perhaps what is called in biology a *sport*—a variation by which life develops in an unexpected direction. Or it is as if a new and powerful element were suddenly introduced into the world, making all the other elements change their relations, producing strange and spectacular reactions. In literature it produces something which is not in Pindar, something which, while not greater than the stock work of the world, is novel and charming, and possesses a power to compel men to follow after it. Of this kind of originality it seems to me there are three great examples in English literature: the Shakespearian comedy, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, and Coleridge's best poems, the four great pieces on which his fame rests. There are, of course, many other lesser exhibitions of this quality—Burns's and Shelley's poetry, the essays of Hazlitt, the Brontë novels, to name a few. None of these, however, are as unique and powerful in their action as those I have first named.

In tragedy, in tragic poetry, Shakespeare must take his chances with a half-dozen other poets. He is certainly not greater here than the author of the Book of Job, or Homer, or Æschylus, or Dante. He does the same kind of work that these do, in much the same way, and to the same effect. And this kind of work is doubtless the most important that man has ever done. An attempt has been made recently in America to displace these master

minds of the world—whose works include ethics as they include all other human interests—in favour of the professed moralists and ethical writers. This is very much as if we should thrust aside the great painters—the Angelos, the Titians, the Rembrandts, who have painted us the picture of all life—and set up in their places the industrious artisans who have drawn us our maps.

Even in *Hamlet*, where Shakespeare's tragedy seems most novel, and in which his influence has been so great as almost to shadow the modern world, he has been anticipated. Prometheus and Orestes are ancient prototypes of that character, and perhaps Don Quixote has carried it to a higher power.

But Shakespeare's comedies are things apart. In them a dreamer is either looking forward with eager eyes, overestimating the beauty and splendour and goodness of the world, or else he has retired in disenchanted disgust into the fortress of his own soul which he furnishes with visions to console him for the disappointments of outward fate. In either case he has produced a new world, an orb within the earth. Only in the Nausicaa scenes in Homer, or in Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, had there been a touch of the same creation. *The Tempest*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*,—what is there in all literature to compete with this complete and perfect world of ideal beauty and magnificence?

The effect of this magical creation has been overwhelming. Poets and novelists in crowds have followed the shining Shakespearian track. Scott, who decanted Shakespeare into his own bottles, Goethe, Hugo in his plays, Musset, Tennyson,—how much of all that is distinguished and delightful in modern literature bears the impress of Shakespeare's work. In particular, the latter may almost be said to have created woman,—or, rather, he interposed between the eyes of men and the real, faulty, though still interesting creature, the splendid or poignant visions of his perfect mates of men. And ever since, men have been falling in love with his creations or those propagated by his followers by cuttings from the plays. Women know very well that there is no such being as the Shakespearian woman. The girls of Jane Austen are the keenest and cleverest satire on their sex.

Sterne's originality certainly does not exist in his materials. The germ idea of his work comes from the *Martinus Scriblerus* of Pope, Swift, and Arbuthnot. The two central characters have more than a reflection of Don Quixote and his Squire. Sterne imitated Rabelais and other French humourists. Yet when all was done the work was revealed as startlingly original. It almost deserves Mark Pattison's praise of it as the most perfect piece of pure humour in the world. Its effect in English literature has been diffusive rather than concentrated. Most later humourists have had a Shandean touch; but few have been full initiates. The author of *The Bible in Spain* and our own

Godfrey Leland are of the number. Carlyle, however, concentrates and reinforces his master. *Sartor Resartus*, which shook the world two generations ago, is Sterne to the backbone. Bulwer transmogrified *Tristram* into a conventional but still excellent novel. In Germany, Sterne's influence has been deeper. Goethe unquestionably felt it powerfully. Jean Paul is a very German Sterne. And Heine, both in prose and verse, is Sterne tricked out for pantomime and setting off rockets with both hands. To the French, Sterne has always been a sort of religion, though they have leaned to the apocrypha of *The Sentimental Journey* rather than to the true canonical books. More recently, Flaubert, in his last and perhaps greatest work, and M. Anatole France, have disclosed the real Sterne.

Coleridge's poetry is the most absolutely original thing in English literature. Shakespeare in his comedy took his raw materials from Lodge and Greene and Lyly, and from the Italian novelists. But except some hints from old English ballads, or from German works on Demonology and Witchcraft, Coleridge's great pieces—*The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, and *Genevieve*—are without parentage, celestial estrays as it were, descended in a dream. In conception, tone, phrase, music, they are flawless. Language obtains in them to a simple perfection beyond the reach of conscious art. That they have nothing to do with life as it is lived, that they are farther removed from the world of prose than even Shake-

speare's comedy, is no fault, rather it makes them full examples of what we dimly discern to be ideal poetry.

And the influence of these poems has been commensurate with their worth. Before *Christabel* was published, it was imitated by Scott, Byron, and Shelley. A good part of Keats is pure Coleridge. *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, is almost as good as *Genevieve*, but it is palpably an imitation. The fragment of *The Eve of St. Mark* is a milder *Christabel*. *The Eve of St. Agnes* is drenched with Coleridge's glamour and colour. Keats is indeed the unrivalled mocking-bird of literature. He could take anyone's note—Shakespeare's, Milton's, Dryden's, Collins's, Chatterton's—and return it back with the true ring, yet embellished with variations which make the strain his own.

More recently, Tennyson, Poe, Rossetti, and many others, have continued the Coleridge tradition. As a long-time champion of Poe, I will not be suspected of depreciating his originality. In comparison with other American writers, or even his English contemporaries, he is an explorer and a discoverer. But his relations to Coleridge are those of a pupil to a master. He is more vigorous and versatile. He left thirty masterpieces where Coleridge left but four. He is more profound in his appeal to human passions and emotions—more Æschylean in his handling. But the fact remains that his work is inconceivable without the previous existence of that of Coleridge, and he never

quite matched his teacher in loveliness, magic, or thrilling awe.

It is obvious, I think, that originality is not a prime literary requisite. Everything is in Pindar which is really necessary for us,—love of the gods, of country, and of home, heroism, disdain of death or meanness, activity of mind and body. The great and permanent works of mankind are too true to be very new. Everything over is in the nature of a luxury: something outside of our staple diet. We do not boast of having soup and roast beef and bread for dinner, though there is nothing better; if we get terrapin and ptarmigan and rare Madeira we may be betrayed into enthusiasm.

The writer who has this gift of originality is more followed than any other. He bears a branch of holly in his hands and draws the crowd after him, which presses near him to discern his secret. It is really not truth that he deals in, but enchantment.

“Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.”

A STUDY IN PROPORTION

ON a hill a little remote from but still overlooking the town of Stratford in England there is a granite shaft, nearly a hundred feet high, which dominates the neighbourhood. The history of its erection is as follows: A young man of Stratford, in the manner of his predecessor Shakespeare, went up to London, but instead of going into poetry devoted himself to the manufacture of that other intoxicant, beer. Accumulating a fortune, he returned to his native town, and, possibly fearing that posterity might not realize his superiority to Shakespeare, built himself this monument.

It seems to me that it is a symbol of what is happening all over the world today. Shakespeare is accepted as the standard of human greatness, and people are everywhere putting up memorials to themselves, or to those they admire, to equal or overtop his. In criticism, biography, current talk, there is a continual shriek arising that "I, thou, he, or she is as great as Shakespeare." Is there any modern writer of importance who has not been compared with, preferred to, or at least judged only a shade less potent than, the master-poet? Even the votaries of practical life have been drawn

into the vortex of Shakespearian comparison. A pedestal for Mr. Rockefeller, of course,—but how in the world does oil come into competition with poetry? It is immensely flattering to Shakespeare that he is selected to keep the list against all comers; but a better sense of values and proportion would discharge him from his perpetual vigil. A champion of the Ring is not expected to meet a new aspirant for the belt until the latter has overcome all other aspirants. Literary criticism has not yet decided who is the greatest writer of the last century. Byron, Hugo, Wordsworth, Balzac, Shelley, Dickens, Tolstoi, and a score or so of others, are in the running. Each of these has his crowd of followers who cry his name to the skies. In the sober judgment of the world, only one modern has drawn himself out of the ruck and got into the class with Shakespeare. And Goethe—as he saw and said himself—has little of the power of his predecessor.

Near things loom large, and new things are usually bright. Criticism is largely a matter of nerves; appreciation depends on subjective feeling. What is novel strikes us with more force than what we have long known. And there is a measure of truth in Victor Hugo's fine saying that all masterpieces are equal. Anyone who has done perfectly a piece of work, however small, which is of constant appeal, is free of the domain of letters. But writers differ in intensity, variety, velocity, mass. There are many elements which must be calculated before we can assign them their respective importance.

Just to lift one corner of the cloud-curtain of that supreme and starry world of Shakespeare which impends over modern literature, I should like to make a little study of the type of female character which he has made peculiarly his own—the brilliant, intellectual, fearless girl, who is really “a pure anticipated cognition” of our most recent feminine ideals. Where did he get his conception? Of course, history is strewn over with women of force and intellect, from Hypatia to Joan of Arc; and many others emerged from mythology and poetry—the Greek and Scandinavian goddesses and heroines, the Clorinda of Tasso, the Britomart of Spenser. These are satisfactory enough in action, but it was reserved for Shakespeare to make them speak. Retaining the nobility of character belonging to the scattered historic or mythical women, he gave them the glittering rapier of the tongue, by which they could more than hold their own against their opposites or enemies, the men.

There are many studies of this wise-virgin type in Shakespeare—Beatrice, Portia, Isabella; but his best all-around girl is Rosalind. Fearless, witty, true-hearted, and brilliant, she is his most dazzling if not deepest female creation. For centuries she has been the favourite of the English-speaking stage. As Hamlet is said to be actor-proof, so Rosalind plays herself. Many actresses have interpreted her supremely well; but, given only the most modest equipment, it would be difficult for any young woman to fail entirely in presenting the part. For one thing, Rosalind domi-

nates her play as completely as Hamlet does his. She is the central fire which lights up all the other pensive and rather shadowy characters. Even in her eclipse at Court, the reigning Duke's daughter is only a foil to her, and she goes into exile like a torch carried through the woods. Probably the very best kind of a young woman has a touch of boy in her. Something more of Rosalind than her attire is virile. She seeks adventures like a Paladin; and though she faints when her affections receive a shock, we feel that she would meet real danger with heroism. But of course her supreme gift is that of brilliant speech. It runs through all the gamut of which wit is capable—gayety, mockery, irony, badinage, humour, sarcasm. Yet it is never less than womanly, ladylike. She is the brilliant forerunner of the Bachelor Girl of to-day—the bright exemplar whom most women would like to resemble. Let us see if any subsequent literary creator has made her match.

The intellectual heroine, once invented, had more or less to conquer the world; and accordingly we find Molière much concerned with her. In several of his comedies, he merely satirizes her; but at length he feels her fascination, and begins to realize her, after the French type, in *The Misanthrope*. Célimène is a thinner and harder creation than Rosalind. All romance is left out of her. She flies the woods and desert wastes, as Rosalind hies to them. She is of the city and society. Her speech has none of the rich natural joy of Rosalind's. It is calculated—polished to a

cutting edge. And in spite of its high breeding—the air of the grand dame which Molière contrives to stamp upon it—it has something of a hint of the repartee of the fish-market. Yet Célimène has at least the suspicion of a heart. Though she prefers to torment, she might possibly be induced to love. As it is, she is perhaps the most fascinating young woman in French comedy; only, she is not central in her play, as Rosalind is in hers. At most, she is a siren of the surf whose white arms wreath the round or beckon afar to the dark abrupt rock of Alceste.

Congreve's Millamant is Rosalind's nearest rival in literature. She is the artifice of artificiality. She lives and breathes in the atmosphere of Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. But in her own sphere she is as rich a creation as her Shakespearian sister. She is more mature. She is all woman. There is certainly no shadow of the doublet and hose in her disposition. She has vapours and languors and ineffable airs. She demands admiration as a right. She lives on a diet of the hearts of men. Like a divinity, she would starve if the smoke of incense were shut off from her. Yet she is utterly without ill-nature, and we feel that at bottom she is as loving as she is lovable. In speech at least, she is fully the equal of Rosalind or Célimène. Perhaps more than is the case with either of these, her words are impregnated with her personality. We hear the tones of her voice in them, see her smile and gesture. English speech has never fallen in more faultless cadences than from her tongue. But

after all, though she has nothing in her of the minx that Célimène displays, she is only a poor relation of Rosalind in point of character.

Lady Teazle is the daughter of Célimène—merrier, shallower, more rowdyish. She picks up the rapier of wit and dashes into the great scandal scene with immense animation; but she does not dominate and direct her coterie as Célimène does. And in that most effective of all comedy situations, the screen scene, her sword drops from her hand and she is dumb. She is a slight personage indeed compared with the rich full-blooded girls of Shakespeare or Congreve.

So much for the dramatists in their best embodiments of this type. The novelists, of course, have taken it up; but it may be said at once that their success is in inverse ratio to the mass of their efforts. The twenty thousand words of a play may generally be depended upon to produce a more distinct creation than the one hundred and fifty thousand of a novel. Scott's *Di Vernon* is perhaps the first satisfactory instance of the type in novel literature. She is a girl of gold. She is as high-spirited and fearless as Rosalind, and is engaged in scenes almost as romantic. She protects the man she loves, and fences with and foils her treacherous cousin. But though Scott allows her to be unconventional in action, he hardly permits her to rise out of conventionality in speech. Indeed, though he could be terse and vivid enough in speeches of passion or eccentric character, his dialogue does not often shine or glow with wit.

Wit there is in plenty in the pages of Jane Austen; but it is a delicate wit, a miniature wit—hardly that nurtured by high natural spirits or polished in the strife of the world. Elizabeth Bennet is the prose Rosalind of an English countryside. She is quite adequate to her occasions and surroundings; perfectly able to take care of herself where nothing is likely to happen to her, and capable of conquering where there are no antagonists worthy of her steel. She is as brilliant as quiet good taste will permit her to be. Tamed Rosalind as she is, we all love her and think Darcy's mansion and park her fitting reward.

George Sand preached the evangel of woman's rights, and illustrated it to the extreme in her own life. It is natural, therefore, that we should look to her for some brilliant exemplar of the woman of intellect. It is pretty hard to find one in her works. The Indianas and Consuelos revolt, but they revenge themselves on man by physical rather than intellectual means. Edmée in *Mauprat* is perhaps her most brilliant heroine. She fights the duel of sex with sweetness, constancy, and valour. But George Sand's languorous and multitudinous prose is hardly calculated to receive the stamp of wit-coinage. We may dismiss even Edmée as only an acolyte in the temple of female intellect.

George Meredith was interested all his life in the question of woman's intellectual equality with man. He believed in it and fought for it; and when he made his greatest effort to exemplify it he seems to have persuaded himself that he had

won his cause and achieved a masterpiece. And, verily, by his enthusiasm, he almost persuades his readers also. Before Diana of the Crossways he prostrates himself with Eastern obeisance. He serves her as a lover and a slave. He thinks no evil of her himself, nor will he permit anyone else to do so. Probably no author ever exhibited his adoration of a character to such an extent. Yet when the reader can free himself from Meredith's special pleading, things do not seem to be as he states them. Diana does about everything that she ought not to do. Endowed with a small property and many friends, she yet permits herself to contract a loveless marriage with the first well-to-do man who offers himself. From him she runs away, and only is saved from scandal—rather mysteriously—by the intervention of a former lover. Then she becomes a Blue-stockings, writes "brilliant" novels, and sets up a rather emancipated *salon* in London. She flirts with an aged prime minister, and falls in love with his rising nephew; and she betrays him with inexplicable Judas treachery for a sum of money. Perhaps this is all right—perhaps a woman is permitted to do these things; but what we are most concerned with is Diana's succession to the throne of wit and intellect founded by Rosalind. Meredith assures us that this is so. He has even less patience with readers who doubt her wit than with those who hesitate at her character. Now while there may be no question at all that the novelist himself had a great inheritance of wit, he seems absolutely unable

to estate his cherished heroine with any of it. As long as he keeps on describing her, lighting her up with his own verbal torches, we fancy that she does really dim the glories of Célimène or Millamant. But the moment she opens her mouth she is betrayed. Compared with them, she can hardly say "Bo" to a goose. It is certainly singular, that back in the dark ages when women's intellectual equality with man was hardly suspected, Shakespeare should have projected the most brilliant female figure in fiction; while recently, in the very van of the feminist movement, and in the tendance of an intense believer in that creed, the clear bright flame of the Rosalind type should sputter out in the dismal failure of Diana.

POETIC EXPRESSION

THERE have recently been published in England two single-volume studies of the work of Algernon Charles Swinburne. They are by friendly critics, but both of these realize that Swinburne is on his defence. They make the most of their poet's unrivalled legerdmain of syllables and sounds. They point out, quite justly, his truth of keeping, by which each poem is, as it were, contained within its own frame. This gift would be more valuable if there were not such an unutterable monotony in his pages,—if the parts of his poems were not mutually interchangeable. They also claim for him insight into human nature, and creative power. To us it seems that his figures, classic or romantic, are mainly affairs of masks and megaphones. But when it comes to what for a poet is really the crux of the matter, the business of poetic expression, they both practically throw up the case. We do not apologize for quoting somewhat largely what they say so well. First let us hear Mr. Edward Thomas :

But Swinburne has almost no magic felicity of words. He can astonish and melt, but seldom thrill, and when he does, it is not by any felicity, as it were, of God-given words. He has to depend on sound and an atmosphere of words which is now and then concen-

trated and crystallized into an intensity of effect which is almost magical, perhaps never quite magical. . . . Perhaps the greatest of his triumphs is in keeping up a solemn play of words, not unrelated to the subject suggested by the title and commencement, but more closely related to rhyme, and yet giving in the end a compact and powerful expression. . . . Hardly one verse means anything in particular, hardly one line means anything at all, but nothing is done inconsistent with the opening, nothing which the rashest critic would venture to call unavailing in the complete effect.

Mr. John Drinkwater's judgment is remarkably similar. He says of Swinburne:

His control of language was, indeed, not distinguished by the magic that, although it was within the compass of his peers, was so only at the rarest intervals. This wizardry that visited every great poet from say Chaucer down to him of yesterday, was known to each but a few times in his life. Those lines of almost inconceivable beauty, lines commoner in Coleridge and Keats than in poets whose collective achievement is greater than theirs, is, when all is said, but an exquisite fragment of our poetry. They amount to a hundred, a thousand perhaps; a mere handful in any case. It has been the privilege of every great poet to shape a few; Swinburne made scarcely one, and he loses one of the poet's rarest if not most commanding distinctions in consequence. . . . The rarest graces are beyond his reach; but to the high expression which is poetry, he attains with superb ease.

We have to question only one point in this last criticism,—the statement as to the rarity of magi-

cal phrase in English poetry. Mr. Kipling in his story entitled *Wireless* reduces the really inspired passages of this kind to just two,—one by Coleridge and one by Keats. It would be interesting to know what those poets, who intoxicated themselves with the fine phrases of their predecessors, would have thought of such a judgment. Hazlitt declared that Wordsworth's lines,

“Elysian beauty, melancholy grace.
Brought from a pensive though a happy place,”

were the most perfect in the language; and the same poet's

“Lady of the Lake,
Sole sitting by the shores of old Romance,”

was probably the parent stock on which Keats grafted his double rose of beauty which Mr. Kipling admires so much.

The fact is that these flowers or jewels of poetic speech are scattered thickly over all English verse of the better kind. They glitter on Chaucer's robe until it seems drenched with dew. They gleam from the folds of half of Spenser's dreamy stanzas. Allowing for the drama's necessary recurrence to the conversational tone, Shakespeare is all compact of them. Milton and the lyric poets contain sumless treasures of them. If Swinburne failed to add anything of the sort to our literature it will go hard with his pretensions, notwithstanding his noble literary enthusiasm and his undoubted mastery of metre.

To use words as if they had never been used before, to impart to them a fresh fragrance, an inexplicable charm, a profundity which makes whole histories or extended phenomena implicit in a phrase—that is what is meant by verbal magic. It does not need that it should deal only with sensuous things, though doubtless on that side the most miracles of language are wrought. The Elizabethan dramatists have the gift, though their sphere is that of action. Dryden, Pope, and Goldsmith have it, though their matter lies mainly in the regions of moral abstractions. The Cavalier lyrists and Burns have it, though they deal with the emotions. It is hardly worth while to give examples. Everyone knows what the best is; but everyone is always forgetting the face of the true *Una* of poetry and taking up with some false *Duessa*. So we shall quote a few lines, not from English writers, but from that American poetry of which Swinburne hardly disguised his contempt. Emerson, almost incapable of a complete poem, could write by fits and starts like a divinity. Take:

“O tenderly the haughty day
Fills his blue urn with fire;”

Or:

“Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there
And ripples in rhyme the oar forsake.”

Poe is all for total effect, yet his words have an almost impossible finish. For example,—

" Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
 O'er its roof did float and flow
 (This—all this—was in the olden
 Time long ago)."

Or this:

"No more—no more—no more—

Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
 Or the stricken eagle soar."

Or this:

" In what ethereal dances,
 By what eternal streams."

Bryant usually gives the weight rather than the
 lustre of words; but take this:

" A friendless warfare! lingering long
 Through weary day and weary year;
 A wild and many-weaponed throng
 Hangs on thy front, and flank, and rear."

FitzGreene Halleck's writing at its best is with the
 best. Witness:

" Green be the turf above thee,
 Friend of my better days!
 None knew thee but to love thee,
 None named thee but to praise."

Or this:

" Wild roses by the Abbey towers
 Are gay in their young bud and bloom;
 They were born of a race of funeral-flowers
 That garlanded, in long-gone hours,
 A templar's knightly tomb."

Simple words these and simple metres, but they have the indubitable magic that Swinburne's two critics deny him.

Yet in the greatest poets this enchanted apparition of words is only the warp of their work; rhetoric, language raised more or less above the ordinary, is the woof. With most verse writers this last is all in all. And it can be very good. In fact, compared with the other it is what light is to lightning,—or perhaps what daylight is to moonlight. Moonlight is more suggestive, lightning more revelational than daylight, but we could not stand either of them all the time. The trouble is that rhetoric is within the reach of almost anyone who can write at all; and if the person using it possesses also the gift of musical speech, the ordered movement of verse, he can easily set up for a great poet. Swinburne is the perfect type of the rhetorical poet who lashes commonplace into extravagance and sets it to a music which has something of the obviousness and overwhelming blare of a brass band. A *tour de force* is always impressive, and no one who knows the difficulties overcome will cease to wonder at Swinburne's management of metre. But the true lovers of poetry will prefer those metrists whose sounds steal upon the ear and win their way to the heart. And this rich and lovely music, like that of some velvet-voiced vocalist, some virtuoso on the violin, "the horns of elfland faintly blowing," is almost always associated with magic of phrase. Shelley is perhaps the only great metrist in the language whose high and lovely

singing is, as a rule, not embodied in words equal to its own exquisiteness. Milton often crashes out discords; and Shakespeare at the height of his expressiveness, in *Lear* for example, disdains music and pictured phrase alike, and gives us instant imminent revelation.

There is much more to literature, even to poetry, than the extreme wizardry of words,—there are the expression of thought, emotion, personality; the creation of character, the telling of tales, the building-up of artistic wholes. All these things can be done with plain business speech or heightened rhetoric. And it is often difficult to say where these end and the more mysterious use of language begins. Most recent critics would decide that Byron, for example, is solely a rhetorician; but for our part we think that he, too, is a weaver of spells,—though his may be black magic rather than white. If verbal magic were only a matter of purple patches, it might be disregarded. But purple patches and fine writing belong to rhetoric rather than to verbal magic. The supreme mastery over words suffuses a glow over whole works, penetrates character, and influences the presentation of thought. It is the thimbleful of colouring matter which makes the blue of the whole sky.

There is, in truth, an analogy between magical language and the use of colour, light, and shade, mere pigment in painting. Drawing, form, grouping, dramatic expression, are the basis, the most necessary things in art; the glory of color, whereby,

as Hazlitt said of Velasquez, things seem to be wished upon the canvas, is comparatively a luxury. Sometimes the two powers go together, but less often than the intellectual and sensuous gifts in poetry. But in both arts, the force of instant and vivid expression is the rarest and most inspirational thing. It is the effortless power of divinity, —all the rest is mere human labour.

LITERATURE, MUSIC, AND MORALS

THE ever-enduring discussion as to whether a book may picture evil, may paint scenes and characters not usually brought to the notice of women and children, and the somewhat similar battles over dancing Bacchantes and nude French art, raise a question as to why music is seldom involved in such controversies. Why is it that literature is by some regarded as a regular Upas plant, and a circulating library in a town as "an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge," while music is suffered to go on its way serenely without any indictment for criminal conversation or corrupting ways?

At first blush, the art which has the most powerful momentary effect on our passions and emotions, which is used to incite men to martial ardour or subdue them to sensuous reverie, which in its simplest and most popular forms—the Soldier's March in *Faust*, or a Strauss waltz—is as effective as in the heroic Symphony of Beethoven or the Nocturnes of Chopin,—at first sight, it would seem that such an art could be most easily misused and most readily accused of wrong-doing. But such is not the case. Nobody except a Nietzsche or a Tolstoi has ever accused any form of music divorced from words

or action of being immoral. The young girl all over the world is not only allowed but encouraged and compelled to busy herself with music, which, if it expresses anything, must express things dangerous as well as things innocent. At the same time, the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of literature is carefully kept from her or selected for her. Why this difference?

It is against the principles of a true American to go to a German philosopher for an explanation of anything,—but perhaps Schopenhauer's metaphysic and theory of art will help us here. In brief, this is how he decides matters: The primal thing, the origin of all, is the Will—the Will to live. This Will arranges itself into many grades, similar to the Platonic Ideas, which are the types and genera of existing realities. These ideas again objectify themselves simultaneously in the world of particulars and individuals, which is the object, and in the knowing mind, which is the subject. The majority of human beings can realize only themselves and the outward world of sense and perception. The genius in the sphere of literature and the fine arts generally does more than this. He rises to a knowledge of the archetypal ideas, and sees the universal in the particular; and he is able to make the rest of mankind dimly sympathize with him. The musician, however, cannot do this. For him, neither the world of sense perception nor that of the primitive Ideas exists. He does not imitate the first, as other artists do, nor does he arrange his forms according to the grades and

divisions of the last. The primal Will speaks through him directly, and every human being in whom the Will exists in its unity and totality feels and understands him without being able to reason about or explain the matter. It follows that the poet who has to deal with the world of sense, in which there is as much evil as good, as much night as day, must, if he give his world correctly, indulge largely in the shadows of existence; while the musician, freed from such world, gives us only the primal impulse of life, which we do not consciously disintegrate into good or bad.

This is very flattering to the writer of music. Artists are envious, and the exquisite fooling of the first act of the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* mildly typifies the cat-and-dog aversion which the members of the various liberal arts have for each other. Nor are the leading arts of expression the only ones that quarrel for precedence. The ancients elevated perfumes almost to the level of poetry, and M. Alcide de Mirobolant wooed his love with symbolic sauces and confections, and considered himself a gentleman and an artist. In short, it is doubtful if Schopenhauer's theory will be widely accepted.

For one thing, he calls music the universal language. If it be, it is a language which has not yet found its Ollendorf. The musical theorist of to-day decides, for example, that Greek music was non-existent. Yet this race, certainly not a stupid one, evidently thought they had attained to complete musical expression. Their literature is full

of references to the art, and a great number of their deities were dedicated to the protection and performance of it. They unquestionably had a varied assortment of musical instruments, though not so many as their predecessors, the Egyptians. Whole orchestras are depicted on the Egyptian tombs, yet the modern musician will probably deny their knowledge of music. Again, Chinese music exists and gives pleasure to a large part of the human race, yet to our ears it seems barbarous dissonance. But the quarrel of European musicians among themselves—the battle of Wagnerites and anti-Wagnerites—is sufficient to plant in the ordinary mind a doubt of Schopenhauer's theory as to music being the immediate and direct utterance of the universal Will. Schopenhauer himself says that where music is fitted to action or words, these should be subordinated to it; which is the direct contrary of Wagner's theory and practice of interpreting actions by music.

If there exists a universal language, it is a simpler one than music—it is the language of gesture and human motion: in other words, the dance. This is, and always has been, practised and understood. If a man is shipwrecked on a desert island, and comes into company of its savage and possibly cannibal inhabitants, how does he go about to make himself understood? Does he troll a stave or sing a long recitative with the *leit-motif* dedicated to hunger reappearing at intervals? No. He kneels down in token of submission—makes motions with his hands to his

mouth and stomach to show his needs: and if he is received and regaled—treated not as a meat but as a guest—he probably skips about in a lively manner to indicate pleasure and gratitude. It is curious to remark that Dante's Paradise—the farthest reach of the human imagination in picturing the unknown—is a soundless world. There are no harps or citherns or orchestras there. There is nothing but light, dancing, and philosophical discourses. Critics there have been who thought it grotesque; and unquestionably the spectacle of grave Doctors of the Church gyrating on one toe, or wheeling three times about Dante and his guide, or flocking together like cranes and writing out symbolical letters on the sky, might make a thoughtless reader smile. But philosophically speaking, Dante was quite right.

If we substitute motion for Will as the primal thing—which, as Schopenhauer refuses to explain the cause of Will and even denies that it has any cause, is a legitimate thing to do—we get a somewhat different relation of the arts to life. Three of the fine arts—dancing, music, and poetry—are founded on motion. For sound is probably only an accident of music,—its real essence is the differently measured and related waves of motion. Beethoven was deaf, but that did not interfere with his creative power, nor, presumably, with his enjoyment of music. Architecture is the reverse of motion—it expresses rest, static immobility, and is best exemplified in Egyptian and Greek buildings. Gothic architecture is an attempt to revolt from

the law of the art, and to express, by means of the heaviest materials in nature, aspiration and upward flight. It is as if a sculptor should carve a statue of Gravitation and give it wings. Sculpture is the arrest of motion. Painting is at its best when it gives the vitality of life, and the scene or figure grows and acts before one. Dancing is motion with forms added. Poetry is motion with forms and ideas added. Music is motion without either forms or ideas—pure unembodied motion. Whether this last method of expression is superior to poetry, which gives in its characters and ideas the whole of the world of sense and in its rhythm the whole of the world of Will, everybody will decide according to previous predilection.

Roughly speaking, I should say that poetry is an aristocratic and music a democratic art. It requires intellect to appreciate the one; while emotion, passion, the Will-to-live, suffice for the enjoyment of the other. Like the Darwinian science, Schopenhauer's philosophy dethrones the conscious intellect and substitutes the blind and spontaneous forces of nature. Yet no one has more loudly and continuously celebrated intellect. He is like a man whose head is twisted on his shoulders and who marches in one direction while his gaze is mournfully fixed another way.

The essential and cherubic innocence of music comes out in this exposition. It has no relation to morals, for things are good or bad as we attach ideas to them. Its world is a world of pure impulse, impetus, and agitation. There can be bad music,

of course,—music hackneyed, or which does not conform to the laws of the art. But it must be difficult for true music to be base or vulgar. It is understood that many of the most popular strains of comic opera have been taken almost bodily from old church music; and the reverse is possible. The stormiest and most passionate music, then,—music, which, for aught we know, may be the utterance of the soul of one of the damned,—can be given to a young girl to interpret without danger of its contaminating her.

But how does poetry stand in this respect? It has in its rhythm, though of course less perfectly than music, the essence of motion, pure, unembodied, and divine. But it is compelled to give also motion which is embodied in nature—motion beautiful, life-giving, turbulent, desolating, and destroying. It has to give the same motion as it is repeated in the mind of man—happy, serene, disturbed, wrathful, death-dealing. Nay, as the desolating elements and forms of nature—fire, storm, earthquake—are the most startling and instantaneous, as the bad motives and actions of men yield themselves most readily to effect and climax, so literature chooses to deal largely with evil. For it loves energy—motion in its intensest forms. It would be actionable if a newspaper were to give in plain prose the plots of many of the greatest masterpieces of literary art. De Quincey did something like this—drew up a *résumé* of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*—and the bare facts were ludicrous and immoral enough. But the

book does not seem ludicrous and immoral when we yield ourselves to its energy and its flow. Cardinal Newman, in his book on *The Idea of a University*, came to this cross-roads. He saw that the profane literature of the world, and particularly that of the ancients, dealt overwhelmingly with evil. Was it, therefore, to be taught to the students of a Catholic university? He decided that it must: that it could not hurt anyone to read in a book what he must know if he takes a stroll on the streets or listens to the gossip of a club. Human nature is robust enough not to be shocked at itself. And human nature translated into the terms of good literature—given, that is, for the sake of the energy and power of which it is capable, and not to pander to base thoughts,—ought not to shock anyone; but on the contrary, especially when it adds the rhythm of poetry—that unexplainable motion sprung we know not whence—it ought to charm the tedium of life and leave us greater and better than we were.

THE ROOT IDEAS OF FICTION

THE making of categories is one of the pet amusements of philosophers, and it is rather astonishing to note the variety of their views as to the root ideas or essential facts of the universe. It might be worth while to apply their methods to Fiction, and, without any pretence at philosophic accuracy, try to draw out the basic facts on which literature is founded,—stop the kaleidoscope, as it were, and examine the few scraps of human experience out of which the coloured confusion of fictional life is woven.

The first root idea of Fiction, then, is Identity. Of course personality, in the wider sense, is a predicate of everything in literature, from the lyrist's strain of passion to the clashing figures of the dramatist or the more complex web of the narrative artist. All that happens must happen to or be caused by personality. But it is a more confined idea of personality—the Me as opposed to the Not-Me—which I refer to as Identity. Literature dallies with this fact in a hundred forms.

Take the idea of twins, or what might be called divided personality. From Plautus to Shakespeare and Molière, and down the line, this idea

has been a most prolific source of plot and situation. The double or echoing personality is nature's variant on the twin theme. Classic literature does not deal largely with such creations, but in the folk-poetry and wonder-fiction of the Middle Ages they are common enough. Spenser's Duessa is a false double of Una. Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* and Dr. Hale's *My Double and How He Undid Me* are two modern instances of the use of this theme. Then there is the idea of a double identity of the Soul—of a shadow character capable of being projected, usually to plague the real one. Calderon's Embozado, Poe's William Wilson, Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, are embodiments of this thought.

A second phase of this root idea is the confusion of personality. This is identity in disguise—as in acting, in girls masquerading as men, in people assuming some other character than their own. This set of situations has been a veritable goldmine to poets and romance writers. Charles Lamb complained that every one of Shakespeare's comedies has a girl-boy in it. But princesses attired as pages trip up and down the whole field of romance. Tasso and Spenser have women warriors who are only revealed when some unlucky stroke of a sword smites their helmets apart and lets the long hair ripple down. Edgar in *King Lear*, and Hugo's Triboulet, are instances of disguise of character. The little play of *David Garrick* gives an example of a person acting a part, and in Peg Woffington we have a character assuming to be her own portrait.

Again, there is the transference of personality, as in the legends of the Were Wolf, or in many witch-stories where those possessed persons turn themselves into cats or dogs. Reincarnation would seem to be a magnificent basis for plot, but I can recall only a few instances of it in literature—Poe's *Tale of the Ragged Mountains*, and *Phra the Phœnician* of the younger Arnold among them. Even the epics and dramas of India deal but sparingly with this idea.

The domination of personality, as in hypnotism, witchcraft, dealings with the devil, have given a good many situations to literature. There is Joseph Balselmo's relations to his mistress in Dumas, the trances of Trilby, the ballad-stories of the revenges of witches on lovers or rivals, Faust's subjugation to Mephistopheles. The imposition of a false personality is a great source of comic plot, as in the story of *The Sleeper Awakened* in *The Arabian Nights*, the Christopher Sly framework of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and Molière's *Médecin Malgré Lui*. In all these situations, the character changes, or seems to change while the world remains the same. Essentially of the same kind are the plots which turn on rejuvenations—obtaining the Elixir of Youth, drinking of the Fountain of Life, etc.

The suspension of personality, as in a long sleep, has given rise to some good plots. There are *The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus* and *Rip Van Winkle*. Here the character remains the same, while the world changes about it. Everlasting identity, as

in the legend of the Wandering Jew, has exercised a deep spell on the human mind, but it is not capable of much variation, though something of the same nature is bodied forth in the popular imaginations which describe Barbarossa sitting clothed and armed in his rock cave ready to issue forth when his time shall come again, or King Arthur in his temporary sleep at Avalon.

The modern theories of heredity have brought forward the inheritance of character as a literary subject. Ibsen's *Ghosts* is the most pronounced embodiment of these theories.

It may almost be said that every German novel is an educational treatise. Since *Wilhelm Meister* set the fashion, the Germans have hardly been able to write a novel which does not deal with the development of a character by training and environment. This subject is to them what the eternal theme of three—husband, wife, and lover—is to the French. Yet they derive it from the French, through Rousseau and our old friend Telemachus.

Surprises, detections, unravelments, recognitions, revelations,—all these have to do with identity. Coleridge said that the *Œdipus* of Sophocles and *Tom Jones* had the best plots in the world. This is hardly so, but they both deal with revelations of identity. So do Poe's detective stories, and the superb novels of Wilkie Collins. Mr. Aldrich has patented a plot of surprise which is mighty effective.

There are more kinds of disguises of personality

than one. There is the material disguise, as where Odysseus returns to Penelope's Court in the rags of a beggar; or where Rosalind sallies forth in doublet and hose. And there is the mental disguise of drunkenness or madness. Herakles is hilariously disguised in the *Alcestis* of Euripides. Falstaff goes through life in a disguise of sack, a dozen different characters peeping forth through the thick fumes that envelop him. The two most magnificent madmen in literature are Don Quixote and King Lear, and it is a question whether they are not both of them more inspired than crazy. Intoxication is a kind of cheap exaltation and the primitive races all consider a madman inspired. Personality at meridian, personality inspired, personality as genius, ought to be a fascinating theme for literature, and I cannot recall that anybody has made much of a fist at it. Chateaubriand and Lamartine and George Sand were always attempting it, but their geniuses are weak-kneed and boneless creations. Poe has hints of this theme throughout his work, and in one or two of his stories quite hits the mark. In real life, the inspirer of personality often takes a supposedly outward form. Numa has his Egeria, Socrates his Dæmon. The idea of an Egeria has taken firm root in the poetic mind, and it has been embodied for all time in Dante and Petrarch. The hero of one of Du Maurier's novels has an Egeria in a lady from Mars who dictates novels and poems to him in his sleep. One cannot say anything about the novels, but the poetry is atrocious.

Character's collision with the Not-Me, or Personality *vs.* The World, is the root idea of many of the noblest masterpieces of literature. Wherever a noble dreamer or enthusiast shatters himself against the inexorable fact, this idea is at work. Prometheus, Hamlet, the Marquis of Posa, Brand, Shelley's cloud characters, Hugo's Galley Slave,—these and myriad other beings of the same blood testify to its power. Personality misunderstood, loneliness, misanthropy, are other forms of the same theme. Shakespeare's Timon, Molière's Alceste, Byron's Childe Harold, are figures of a kindred group. Personality in antithesis is a minor variant of this last type. Don Quixote and Sancho, Walter Shandy and My Uncle Toby, give in little the idea of the heroic struggler and the resisting world.

Evil identity, bad intellect dominant, is another type, and, after the group I have just named, is probably the most prominent in literature. Iago, Richard, Don Juan, Mephistopheles,—one could call an endless roll of these Satanic stars. Milton's Lucifer is on the whole too noble to be named with them. He is a great and rebellious son of God, and belongs rather with Prometheus and Hamlet.

Animal identity—or, rather, the casting of human personalities into animals—has been a great cause of good writing, from Æsop and the Indian originals of Pilpay through the French beast-epic of Reynard the Fox, down to the stories of Uncle Remus. I do not know whether the reverse has ever been distinctively and definitely

tried,—I mean the clothing of beasts in men's skins. Of course such a process is glimpsed at in almost every work of literature. We always have men resembling lions or wolves or foxes, and women who carry with them the stamp of tigers or antelopes or snakes.

Lastly, we have intellect identifying itself with nature—the human personality projecting itself into the world. This is the main source of mythologies and folk-lore. In older literature this projection was a definite one; the god or nymph or naiad sat visibly enthroned on cloud or tree or wave. Modern landscapists, either in words or colours, have changed all that. They give a sense of identity or personality to ocean or desert or storm, but they do not embody these aspects of nature in human form. Theirs is a deeper and subtler manner of myth-making, but it is also more vague and uncertain. The poet or painter who uses it asks a great deal from the reader or spectator. This difference in method probably explains the preponderance of landscape in modern literature and our apparent greater enjoyment of natural aspects. The Greeks loved nature as much as we do, studied its appearances as deeply; but when they brought it into art, they dealt with it in brief: their mythological figures were hieroglyphics—a sort of shorthand which saved a great deal of writing. We have to use a cloud of words to give the same impressions.

I have probably not touched upon half the ways in which the mysterious thing I have called Iden-

tity enters into Fiction. And I have not even named the other roots of Fiction whose innumerable runners send vigour and virtue up to build the great trunk and the commingling intricacies of branch and foliage of the tree of Literature. As I conceive it, these other roots are Hunger, Love, and Death. Anyone who desires can easily take the clue of one or the other of these essential ideas and trace it through the maze of Fiction.

THE HUNGER-MOTIVE IN FICTION

POETS are not plagiarists, but men are the same. The distribution of myths, the re-appearance of incident, the repetitions of history, all point, not to tradition or heredity, but to the rooted likeness of men and circumstance. Nature and humanity — this is the world; and the world of art is like unto it. The works of this last world vary according to their intensity, their differing admixture of plot and character, and by the quality of soul in the creative artist which gives him his originality of thought and separateness of expression.

Hunger is the great motive for the work of the world. Nearly all industries, warfares, adventures, displays of wealth, social arrangements as far as property is concerned, are bottomed on this fact. Half the happiness or misery of mankind arises from it. The mere will to live expresses itself as hunger before conscious identity is established. And the old woman in *Punch*, who, when her clergyman inquired of her what blessings she was most grateful for during her long life, answered, "My wictuals," said a true thing.

What would fiction do without eating and drinking? If I were asked to name the difference

between dramatic and narrative art, I think I should say that it consisted in the way that respective poets feed their characters. Of course there are some pickings on the tables of the dramatists. The Thyestian banquet is at least mentioned in the *Agamemnon*, and in the *Cyclops* we almost assist at a similar cannibalistic feast. Shakespeare in general is a "poor provider," though the Duke feasts in *Arden*, and *Macbeth* sits down to the ghost-interrupted banquet, and *Falstaff* consumes at least one pennyworth of bread. If Shakespeare had had a real feeling for good living, he would not have let *Petruchio* fling the viands about as he did. No; the dramatists do not much condescend to eating. They can handle liquor very prettily. *Don Juan* drinks to the *Commandante*. The boors tinkle in *Auerbach's* cellar, and *Carl Moor* and his comrades swig in the forest. But they do not fall to like honest trenchermen. Possibly it is because in a play they have not the time. A glass of wine can be tossed off in a second, but nobody would believe that a character could get through a satisfactory meal in the brief moment allowed by stage action.

But the narrative poets and novelists! What banquets, feasts, dinners, luncheons, snacks, they provide, primarily for their characters and secondarily for their readers' regalement! To begin with *Homer*: his heroes are always eating, and we are even allowed to see the cooking of the huge joints of beef that nourish their mighty ardour. *De Quincey* found out that *Odysseus* ate four dinners

in one night! Probably he was laying in for a campaign, like the Esquimaux who eat enough blubber and whale-oil at one meal to last them a month. The old Irish epics reek with the kitchen smell. Their heroes fought magnificently for their cattle-spoils, and devoured them nobly. The worst reproach a bard could cast upon a man was to say that in his house "the guests did not grease their knives." Chaucer is a very lord of hospitality. One of his most amiable characters is the Frankeleyn in whose house "it snowed of meat and drink." Milton, the loftiest of poets, is liberal enough to Adam and Eve in the matter of fruits and nuts and such like food—rather cold comfort, one would think, though the Archangel partakes affably enough when he drops in to take pot-luck with our first parents. Keats's pretty "spread" in the *Eve of St. Agnes* reminds me of a supper I once sat down to after a long cold day's ride. It consisted of four kinds of cake, three kinds of pie, and a half-dozen different preserves. But Keats's meal was purely an æsthetic one, for the eye. It does not appear that the parties in interest partook of it at all. They tripped away into the night, and left the cates and dainties untouched in Madeline's chamber.

After all, it is to the prose writers that we must go for the full fury and fervour of appetite and the satisfaction thereof. Petronius devotes nearly the whole of his book to Trimalchio's dinner. Some library-giving philanthropist should make this work accessible to the poor of all the world.

There is enough food in it for an army. Reading it is as good as a meal, any day. One can say of *The Arabian Nights* that the people in it are great dinner-givers. They never meet together in a social way but someone claps his hands and servants appear with salvers laden with food. Of course, to a flesh-eating Northerner the temperate Arab's predilection for dates and figs and sherbets seems trifling. The celebrated Barmecide dinner is only their ordinary fare pushed to the extreme. Mention of this meal brings to mind that other state banquet where Sancho Panza, at the height of his felicity as governor of an island, has the dishes whisked away from him before he can taste them. Cervantes, indeed, is full of delightful episodes of eating, and though Don Quixote may have to discourse over a banquet of acorns, or Sancho gorge himself with cow-heel, they both make up for it at Camacho's wedding, where the squire is given a long fork and told to browse at large among the steaming cauldrons.

Fielding and Smollett, as befitted their lusty natures, gave their heroes large appetites and let them loose on an innkeeping world. Fielding even endows his heroines with a certain touch of that feeling for food which is probably out of the reach of the feminine soul. That supper—of stewed mutton, was it not?—which Amelia prepared for Captain Booth deserves Thackeray's praise. Sir Walter Scott was hardly inferior as a trencherman to his predecessors. The scene where the pious Clerk of Copemanhurst first denies and then

196 The Hunger-Motive in Fiction

accords King Richard his hospitality is one of the decisive dinners of fiction. But the culinary gods of literature are surely Dumas and Dickens. Their books exhale, not the odour of Russia leather or celestial gums, but the fragrance of delightful cookery. We open one of them with the same feeling with which we approach a country inn at the coming of dusk, and see the windows glowing red and the grey smoke curling up from the chimneys. Nor are we ever disappointed. What a savoury succession of viands do we enjoy! What a motley and magnificent company of boon comrades do we meet! How often have we lunched, guests unseen, with D'Artagnan and his comrades in the Bastion St. Gervais, or watched Chicot in the Paris tavern persuade Dom Modeste out of his fasting and his sermon! How often have we been with Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness at their frugal meal, or looked on as Tom Pinch's sister made the meat pie! But perhaps the full enthusiasm, the very rigour of the game of eating, is to be found, not in a novel, but in the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* of Christopher North. This is the delirium of what Milton called "concoctive heat." As compared with other writers who imaginatively tickle the gustatory nerves, Wilson reminds me of the placard in a Western restaurant: "Dinner fifty cents; an immortal gorge, one dollar."

Even Homer did not catalogue all the heroes on the plains of Troy, and I cannot begin to name the novelists to whom hunger and its satisfaction are

sources of incident. In general, the keener the want the keener the zest of eating, both to the character and the reader. When one of Mr. Clark Russell's sailors, after tossing about for days in an open boat, climbs aboard a deserted ship, breaks into the storeroom, eats his fill and takes an inventory of the provisions at hand, our mouths water in sympathy. The lists of provisions given in books of Arctic exploration are delightful reading, though no one would care to wade through a grocer's catalogue. In a higher way there are carefully-wrought scenes of hunger in fiction which impress us by their pathos. Jane Eyre's starvation on her flight from Thornfield Hall is one. The incident in Feuillet's novel, where the starving young nobleman takes a piece of bread which his sister is about to throw away, and tells her that he will give it to a poor man, is another. Starvation, indeed, is one of the long-suits of the novelist to engage our sympathy.

Pestilence, disease, resulting as they mostly do from a lack of proper nutrition, are powerful agents of plot and situation. For the first, there is the Florentine plague which serves as a sombre background to the gay scenes of the *Decameron*, the similar pestilence which is introduced into Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi*, and the death-scurge at Philadelphia which is the main subject of one of Brockden Brown's novels, I think *Edgar Huntley*. Disease in individuals is too common in literature to need specification. I will only name André Chénier's poem the *Jeune Malade*. Con-

198 The Hunger-Motive in Fiction

valescence, too, which is a sort of new birth with a special keenness and delicacy of appetite and sense, is a good theme. Thomas Gray has a poem on the subject, and there is a novel by Edmond About describing the recovery of a consumptive girl in the south of Europe which treats the matter with great charm.

Wealth, which is a sort of concentrated food, or at least a safeguard against hunger, is an ingredient in most plots. The Argonauts sail for the Golden Fleece; King Lear gives his property away and comes to grief; the envious uncle does the Babes in the Wood to death in order to inherit their estate; the Nabob from India comes back in the nick of time to endow a heroine or rescue a scapegrace nephew,—obviously this branch of our inquiry is so large that one can only hint at it. Adventures to gain a fortune, treasure-seeking, and so forth, come under this head. Dumas's *Monte Cristo*, Poe's *Gold Bug*, and a myriad other stories, body forth the primal idea of wealth as a shield and a weapon. Perhaps *Robinson Crusoe* is the central book of the world in symbolizing the desirability of property. When Crusoe is cast away and has stripped the wreck of all available articles, he boasts that he has a greater stock of necessities than was ever gathered together for one man's use before. Yet he goes on building, planting, breeding, and is really the type of our race. Balzac is the novelist of modern times who has most realized the value of wealth. Money is the great theme of all his works. Other novelists

and dramatic writers have made the miser a comic or despicable figure, but old Grandet is almost respectable. The getting of money with him is a duty and a religion.

There are many figures in fiction that stand for the negation of wealth. The hermit idea is best embodied in the Hindu epics and dramas; but the Philoctetes of Sophocles, the Timon of Shakespeare, Scott's Black Dwarf, are European examples. Perhaps Thoreau's *Walden* may be accepted as our American contribution to this theme. Wars, conquests, discoveries of new lands, colonizing, and such enterprises, are for the most part only larger exhibitions of the greed for wealth, the desire to make life secure. The multitude moves, instead of one man. The results belong to history rather than to fiction, but literature takes the historic legend for its own. The Pandu brothers, Herakles, Agamemnon, Cæsar, Attila, Vasco de Gama, Columbus,—the names are endless of those who explore or struggle for dominion.

There is a whole section of literature which deals with the growing of crops, the raising of cattle, the annual replenishment of man's stock of food. The pastoral poetry of the world, the idyls of Theocritus, Virgil's *Georgics*, the Italian and English shepherd plays, are all based on this theme. Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* gives the idea in reverse. A thousand modern novels deal with the life connected with pastoral occupations. Half the charm of *Lorna Doone* resides in the

200 The Hunger-Motive in Fiction

pictures of farm-life—the corn waving on the hillside, the poultry cackling in the yard, the pigs fattening in the pen, all of which edibles are to furnish provender for the mighty appetites of John Ridd and his compeers. The novels of Thomas Hardy also are full of such scenes. The sense of growing things pervades them all.

The nomad life of hunting and fishing is almost equally represented in fiction. Rama and Sita and Laksmana in the Indian jungle, the Hunt in Calydon which has inspired more than one ancient and modern tragedy, *Der Freischütz*, Melville's *Moby Dick*,—these are only a few instances. There is an American author of the past, who used to be called the "Shakespeare of nature-writers," whose hunting sketches and stories have a freshness and zest all their own. No one has expressed better than Frank Forrester the primal savagery of man in preying upon the lower creatures, his delight in hunting, tracking, killing, and eating his game. With our more recent nature-writers the bird or beast "sits not as a meat but as a guest," which is more humane but hardly as true.

Commerce has to do with the hunger idea also, as providing the means for distribution of earth's products. And with commerce come in the themes of houses, inns, cities, roads, rivers, the sea. And these themes bourgeon out into innumerable minor ideas of home, hospitality, journeys, highwaymen, voyages, pirates, and so forth forever. Science in use has provided weapons to fight

hunger, and writers like Jules Verne and Mr. Wells have drawn inspiration from its inventions.

Lastly in our category, there is the hunger of the earth and the hunger of the ocean. The earth, like Kronos, devours its own children, trees, vegetation, men, cities. This theme is best expressed in Gray's *Elegy* and Bryant's *Thanatopsis*. The ocean finally devours the earth and all that is thereon. Cities which have slipped into the sea have furnished matter for many a legend and song, as have the stories of buried galleons and fleets. After the Duke of Clarence's vision in Shakespeare, Mr. Janvier's *Sargasso Sea* is the most wholesale and impressive treatment I can think of regarding this theme.

THE LOVE-THEME IN FICTION

ENTER, woman. Immediately the world begins to brighten and bustle and sparkle. Man's Eden without Eve would be a dirty place, full of tobacco smoke. Nay, if it had not been for the urging of the ever-womanly he would have been content with cocoanuts and a strong tail to swing himself from tree to tree. All that man really wants of his own accord is to gnaw at a great shin of beef, knock some other man's brains out with the bone, and then plunge into meditation on the What and Why and Where of the universe. But his sweet tormentor appears, and he has to clean and dress himself and cultivate the courtesies of life, and turn his talents to practical account in order to furnish her with barbaric wealth of gold and gems.

This essay is predicated on the fact that there is some difference between men and women, and that the sexes equally acknowledge this and are willing to do their duty in the station of life to which it has pleased God to call them. This view is not altogether fashionable today. Perhaps it was not fashionable in the Athens of old, when Aristophanes wrote his *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusæ* and *Thesmophoriazusæ*; or in Alexandria, when Hypatia preached rebellion to her girl acolytes.

A lost tragedy of Æschylus is founded on an incident which shows that even in mythical times the question of woman's place and rights was to the front. The story is to the effect that the women of an island in the Archipelago rose one night and killed all their male relatives to the last child. That was thorough, and might be commended to our modern ladies. On the other hand, there is a novel by Sir Walter Besant called *The Revolt of Man*, which describes a future revolution against the power of women. It is well to get these abnormal situations out of the way before beginning on our proper study.

Man's idol-worship of woman springs partly from his long years of submission to and reverence for his mother, and partly from the instinct for beauty which nature has implanted in him. The girl, in her grace and charm and softness and modesty, is a mystery to him. He is imperiously compelled to account her a higher being than himself. Her glance inspires him. His tongue is attuned to eloquence and wit; his limbs spring forward for deeds of emulation or valour. That is the Sacred Love of the great painter. In its highest manifestations it becomes the devotion of Dante for Beatrice or Michael Angelo for Vittoria. On a lower but still high level it is the theme of most of the love poems of the world. Mixed with a good deal of Profane Love, it is the common stuff out of which domestic life is fashioned. The South Sea Islander, having worshipped his misshapen image of stone or wood for a year or so,

takes it down, gives it a good thrashing, and then sets it back upon its pedestal and worships it some more. Men do this, mentally at least, with women; for the need of adoration remains to the end.

There is a question whether such romantic love as I have described is not a comparatively recent invention. It certainly does not come out strongly in Greek literature, where woman seldom finds herself dominant, except in the case of Helen, whose power is attributed to a goddess behind her. But the *Ramayana*, perhaps in its original state one of the oldest of human compositions, is the very ecstasy of romantic love. The questions of the purity and faithfulness of woman, and her consequent influence over men, are worked out in this poem as they might have been by Shakespeare or Tennyson. And the same is true of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, and even of *The Toy Cart*, though the heroine of this last piece is a courtesan. The power of woman to charm and inspire and lead man to the heights is probably as old as human nature. In the literature of the south of Europe—leaving out Dante and Petrarch—it is not much in evidence; while the Scandinavian and Celtic literatures fairly blaze with the glory of this power. Siegfried and Brunhild, Deirdre and Naoise, the men and women of the Arthurian legends, are perfect exponents of romantic love. And the supreme poet of the North has given expression to a score of varieties of imaginative passion, from the tender fooling of Orlando and Rosalind, the

jealousy and devotion of Posthumus and Imogen, up to the blighted adoration of Othello's great heart. Goethe is a good second in painting the overwhelming power of good women over strong men. And with Wagner, the devotion of woman is the redemption of man.

Sensuousness, as Milton saw, is the very essence of poetry. Milton himself, and his master Spenser, are perhaps more sensuous in their painting of the nude—the nude touched, too, with passion—than any other of our poets. There is no doubt they did right. But is sensuality a proper subject for literary treatment? This is the sole meaning of all the discussions about morality in art. Nobody objects to the use of other evil agencies—envy, hatred, murder, theft, and so forth—in fiction. It would be impossible to write a Sunday-school story of two pages without some bad habit or vice in it. But Profane Love, the illicit relations of men and women,—is that a fit subject for print? The prints we see the most of—the newspapers—are full of it. I do not see why we should prevent great artists from using such matter, if they want to. In the first place, it is full of power, and creative artists will seek power wherever it is to be found. In the second place, the Earth-spirit of Lust is the foil or complement to the Divine Spirit of Love. He keeps the latter from becoming too thin and ærial, or too false and pompous, and sets him off in true relief. You cannot paint a picture with white paint on a white canvas. All colours and shadows must enter into the composition of a

206 The Love-Theme in Fiction

picture of the world. Personally, I prefer the creed of Lovelace's lines,

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not Honour more,"

to the creed of Browning's poem, *The Statue and the Bust*. I prefer the girls of Shakespeare to the problematic women with an unproblematic past who flourish in contemporary plays. But all are part of the show of the world, and I do not know where to draw the line between Molière's *School for Wives* and Casanova's *Memoirs*, between Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Balzac's *Contes Drolatiques*, between *Tom Jones* and Zola. The very worst of such books soon correct themselves by causing a surfeit, and we return with greater love to the pure delineations of imaginative passion.

If love is the sun that vivifies the world, friendship is the moon and all the stars. In Greek literature it has practically thrust love out of doors. The friendship of Achilles and Patroclus is a nobler and more beautiful thing than the love of Paris and Helen. Orestes and Pylades are examples of a better feeling than the hot and selfish love of man and girl. And the sisterly friendships of Antigone or Electra stretch down to us across the years with calm and healing charm. What situations there are in earth's records of the friendship of men for men, of women for women—or of men and women for each other! That circle of orators and poets and philosophers around Pericles,

those other circles around Augustus, or Louis the Fourteenth, or the Duke of Weimar; Shakespeare's tavern companions; Dr. Johnson's club, and a myriad other coteries,—how they stand out in the light of Time! The world owes a great part of its good work to the mutual admiration and mutual help of friends. Of course the modern epic of friendship is *The Three Musketeers* of Dumas.

Courtship may be considered as the duel of sex. There is probably nothing in the world so proud and self-sufficient as a high-spirited young girl. She will patronize the Pope, or pat a pyramid on the head. Before she can be brought to surrender, tamed to submission, there is verge and scope enough for great comedy. Mirabell and Millamant's love-chase in Congreve's *Way of the World*, and Di Vernon's treatment of her rather loutish lover in Scott's novel, are examples. On the other hand, Rosalind's wooing of Orlando gives the woman as the aggressor; and Mr. Bernard Shaw has developed this theme to its full, and rather more than its full, extent.

Desire without requital is a noble theme, albeit one that carries with it a slightly ridiculous air. In the old-fashioned novels the maiden pines away and the lover goes into the army and leads a forlorn hope. Michael Angelo's love for Vittoria is an instance in real life. Tennyson's *Maud* is perhaps the most thorough-going instance in modern poetry. The whole theory of the Troubadour life and the later Courts of Love was based on this idea.

Quarrels, reconciliations, love intrigues, the opposition of circumstance,—these are the spice of half the fiction of the world. The fact that the course of true love never did run smooth is a providential enactment for the sake of plot and situation. Few plays could get beyond the first act, few novels beyond the first chapter, if it were not for this quality in the constitution of things. Shakespeare pleasantly ridicules the whole matter in *The Midsummer Night's Dream* with Puck's ironical comment, "What fools these mortals be!"

Poe thought that the death of a beautiful and beloved woman was the highest theme that poetry could attempt. He has expressed it in *The Raven* so as to thrill all the world. But this matter properly belongs to another study.

Woman is the joy-giver. A great part of the realized happiness of life comes through her. Books that end well end in marriage. Yet it is the anticipation of happiness which comes out most in literature. Wedding songs are short. I cannot recall any play or poem or novel which is one long epithalamium. Perhaps they would be dull.

Woman is the guardian of life. As mother, nurse, guide, teacher, she holds a great place in literature. Andromache smiles to us across the centuries with Astyanax on her lap. Medea is an instance of perverted maternity. Shakespeare is full of mothers—the tragic Constance, Lady Macduff, the mother of Perdita, Countess Rousillon, and many more. One of the most truthfully drawn mothers in fiction is Mrs. Pendennis; and

one of the most enchantingly portrayed is Lady Castlewood, Esmond's second love. Beyond and above all, there is the Mother of Christ to whom art and song have done homage for two thousand years.

Woman is the organizer of the social pageant. She is the principle of cohesion which brings together the male atoms that would otherwise fly apart. And though without a hundredth part of man's instinct for beauty, or his taste and power of conception and execution, she compels him to bring all these gifts to her service; she makes him build her beautiful houses and furnish them fittingly; she makes him invent exquisite fabrics for her to wear, and dig up gems wherewith to adorn her. More than this, she turns him—man himself, the Orson of woods and caves—into an exquisite, into a courtier, into a dandy. Osrick and Beau Brummel are her creation; so are the wits and beaux that flourish in a thousand comedies and novels.

Finally, woman is the maker of home. I hardly know whether this can be considered a separate theme, though such poems as Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea* and Burns's *Cotter's Saturday Night* really express the sentiment of home more than anything else. And the same sentiment dominates *The Vicar of Wakefield*. The home-making instinct is indeed almost the dominant one in woman. She goes about building her nest as inevitably and almost as unconsciously as a bird. This instinct peeps out of Imogen's action in her brother's cave;

it accompanies Déirdre on her flight in Alba; it sits prettily upon Eve in her paradisiacal bower in Milton's epic. In a myriad interiors of a myriad novels and poems, woman sits enthroned the queen of a limited but undisputed domain.

The best kind of love, as I have tried to show, is based upon sacrifice. We bring presents of flowers and fruits to our idols, we offer up burnt sacrifices, and finally we yield them our hearts and lives. This kind of service can be given to other objects than women. We are rooted, almost as trees are, in the soil from which we spring; our frames are built out of its elements; we bear the badge of its clime upon our brow. And love of country, patriotism, is the natural outcome. Literature is full of this theme. In the narrow states of Greece, duty to the state was almost the first obligation of life. Antigone is refused permission to bury her brother because he has sinned against his native land. *The Persians* of Æschylus is a chant of triumph for Salamis. Virgil's epic was written with the one view of the eternal emblazonment of Rome. Shakespeare's English histories were inspired by a like purpose—at least, many of their most splendid passages breathe the fire of passionate love. Walter Scott may almost be said to have created Scotland by his intense patriotism. The theme of country love is treated by Schiller in his *William Tell* and by Goethe in *Egmont*. There are innumerable other works in which it is the dominant note.

Love of mankind—philanthropy—is in some

sense a modern feeling. It is of course an ingredient in some religions—the Buddhistic and Christian,—but national and racial hatreds kept it long in check. It really seems to be a special growth of our times. Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* is almost the earliest document of it,—Rousseau's propaganda the most effective one. The final scene of the second part of *Faust* is a summing up of philanthropy; Hugo's *Les Misérables* is an immense expression of it. Frankly, the sentiment is almost too vague and vast to be a good theme for fiction. The love of fame, of glory, dictating heroism and personal action of various kinds, is a better one. Hotspur, impatient of the hour in which he could not fight, aspiring to pluck bright honour from the drowned moon; Falconbridge, pushing into the quarrel of kings; Cellini, sacrificing his metal household implements to fill out the mould of his Perseus; Chatterton, fighting for fame in his garret,—these are vivid and distinct figures of appeal.

There are various oddities of love which may form a sort of comic afterpiece to this study. Such are the love of animals pushed to excess, the love of bric-à-brac, the collector's mania, and so forth. Squire Western probably cared more for his dogs and horses than he did for Sophia, and Scott's Antiquary certainly loved his black-letter ballads better than his niece. There is a delightful French story, *The Porcelain Violin*, which gives the collector's mania to the life.

THE MASTER NOTE IN LITERATURE.

DEATH is the shadow which defines light. It is the mystery which underscores and emphasizes life. It is the negation which makes the assertion of existence valuable. The poetry of life, even the poetry of love, cannot compare with the poetry of death. At the touch of death the common masks of life are dropped, the vulgar veils of flesh dissolve, and high and stately forms step forth,—imagination unembodied on earth, possibilities unhinted in the race we know.

I have no desire to add a page to Drelincourt on Death. But impatience consumes one at our modern attitude to the great, serious, and tragic themes of thought and art. Especially does our American hedonism, our love of pleasure, our fear of pain or shock, rebel at the best and highest in literature. We grasp at the shallow criticism which speaks of the pessimistic, the melancholy, the gloomy, as the minor note. Even in music, from which this term is borrowed, it is not true that melancholy themes or notes which excite sad impressions are secondary. Most of the great symphonies, oratorios, requiems, are sad and stormy and terrible. And the same conditions are so plain in literature that a critic must apologize

for pointing it out. But, our childish readers say, there is enough that is painful and shocking and horrible in life,—why reiterate it in literature? Wordsworth prayed for frequent sights of what is to be borne. We do not acquire fortitude by running away from danger, and a literature of lollipops is not likely to make a strong race. The tragic part of literature is the most tonic and most inspiring.

But to our task, which is to try to draw out the themes and situations in literature which have to do with death. First, there is the bier, the tomb, the grave themselves. Shakespeare frequently introduces the dead upon a bier. Antony comes to bury Cæsar, not to praise him. Richard woos Anne over the bier of her husband. King Lear's heart cracks as Cordelia is borne in. Then there is the tomb of the Capulets, Hamlet at Ophelia's grave, the funeral of Imogen. Hugo has *Hernani* amid the tombs of the kings: and in Byron's *Prisoner of Chillon* the prison becomes a grave. The grave yawned at every step in English eighteenth-century literature. Gray's *Elegy*, Blair's *Grave*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, testify to the nerves of a people who were not afraid to face death. The Romantic school in Germany dealt so much in shrouds and cerements and fleshless bones that their literature is like an undertaking establishment.

Burial alive is a theme which so fascinated the imagination of our greatest American literary artist that he made it the basis of several of his stories. Its possibilities are summed up, however,

214 The Master Note in Literature

in Juliet's speech. Suspension of life by means of drugs is a common enough factor of plot. Juliet herself simulates death in that way. The deception of death is used by Shakespeare in the *Winter's Tale* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Temples, cathedrals, churches, are man's tribute altars to death. From Delphi and Stonehenge down they have been favoured haunts of fiction, and in *Notre Dame* Victor Hugo has summed up and expressed the sentiment that attaches to them.

Old cities, ruins, relics of the past, these breathe forth the very odour of death. Marius meditating over the ruins of Carthage, Ossian apostrophizing Balclutha, Childe Harold wandering among deserted fanes,—these are figures that occur in this connection.

Waste places, deserts, mountain tops,—these are nature's monuments of death. The first Christian anchorites, each one of whom was a *memento mori*, a living denial of life, retired to the edge of the Egyptian desert. Balzac's *Passion in the Desert* expresses some of the sentiment of such places, and Flaubert's *Tentation de St. Antoine* gives the hallucinations which arise in them. Leopardi's *Ode to the Ginestra* expresses the mountain desolation and much besides.

Men are subject to partial deaths—loss of limbs, decay of faculties, paralysis, age. Invalidism is in literature in a thousand forms. Two of its oddest figures are the hero of Balzac's *Peau de Chagrin* who had his life shortened every time he

made a wish, and Peter Schlemihl who lost his shadow.

There is a vast deal of poetry dedicated to the death of the year—Autumn. I am inclined to think that the Spring poets are not so prolific, nor have they so good a subject.

World engulfments, such as earthquakes, tidal-waves, volcanic destructions, are, like great wars, on too big a scale for literature to handle easily. Bulwer's *Last Days of Pompeii* is an effort in this field, and there is a story of Jules Verne's about the partial destruction of the earth by a comet.

All these matters, however, are the mere fringe of our subject, the penumbra of the black eclipse. The central body of tragedy is concerned with the agonies and deaths of single figures and selected groups. The wholesale massacres of war are, as I have said, at once too vast and too business-like to be of much use in fiction. The execution done by the ancient epic heroes was more interesting than anything of the kind since. As a fighter in the *Iliad* or *Æneid*, you had a rather intimate and engaging task before you. You met your opponent face to face; you could select the special joint or organ you wished to carve or aim at; you saw the blood gush and the death-spasm convulse him—and then you passed on to other work. In the middle ages, when your foe was a moving tower of steel, you were a great deal less in touch with him; and in modern times, when unseen you pump lead at an invisible enemy, a mile away, there can be no personal interest in the business at all.

216 The Master Note in Literature

In the main, epic poetry is outward rather than inward, physical rather than spiritual, martial rather than tragic. The glitter of arms, sounding of trumpets, neighing of horses, descriptions of apparel, houses, cities,—all the panorama of earth, ocean, air,—these ordered of course by some great event, are its subject matter. The deaths in it are incidental rather than inevitable. But in tragedy everything draws onward to the final stroke of fate. In the *Agamemnon*, all the incidents,—the first glare of the beacon, the murmuring of the chorus about the dreadful past of the House of Atreus, the shrinkings and vaticinations of Cassandra,—lead up to the moment when the doors are thrown open and Clytemnestra is seen leaning on the blood-stained axe. The whispers of the Witches on the blasted heath fearfully presage the horrors that are to come in *Macbeth*. The ghost appears to Hamlet, and then there can be nothing but death and desolation at Elsinore. It is this concentration of all effects upon a certain point, and that point the death of one or more great characters, which makes tragedy the most impressive work of man.

There are deaths of high and holy mystery,—such as that of Moses, rapt away to his unknown grave; Elisha, caught up by the fiery chariot; and Œdipus at Colonus, whose death, “if ever any was, was wonderful.” Another is the living death of Prometheus, chained to the rock, his vitals continually eaten and continually renewed, until he consents to yield his secret to Zeus.

Death scenes which hardly amount to high tragedy may yet rank as most pathetic and effective pages of fiction. How many tears have been shed over the death of Little Nell or Paul Dombey! What rather higher emotions have been roused by the passing away of Lefevre or Colonel Newcome! And the death of Porthos,—that scene alone would make Dumas immortal.

Newspaper writers invariably condemn the interest in murders as morbid. I am not sure I know what morbidity means, for I continually find myself applauding things in literature which persons of more delicate sensibilities tell me are tainted with that quality. I suppose the morbid is the abnormal, the unnatural. If this is so, the whole human race must be steeped in it, for there is nothing that so attracts and interests mankind as a murder. De Quincey's grotesque papers on *Murder Considered as a Fine Art* hardly overstate this interest. I suppose the feeling of the many in this matter is a compound of sympathy with the victim whose person and past are suddenly lifted into a glare of light, a sickening sense that the same thing might happen to themselves, a desire for revenge, and a shock of excitement which raises them for the moment above the dull routine of life. All these feelings are natural. Probably three-fourths of the tragic pieces of the world, and a goodly share of the novels, are based on murder or suicide themes.

Death overhanging but evaded, as in hair-

218 The Master Note in Literature

breadth escapes, heroic histories, adventures by land and sea, forms a main strand of fiction.

But death is the gate to the other world. Mankind marches through its open portals, and comes not back. What do come back are troops of ghosts and gods, philosophies and religions, thoughts that assuage and assure.

The scientific method has of late been applied to animism—to occult and spiritual phenomena. Cases have been counted and tabulated, the credibility of witnesses investigated; a vote has been taken, as it were, on the subject. Probably the results will not convince anybody who did not believe before. But it is made certain that animism is as deeply rooted in the modern world as it ever was. And it is equally certain that its manifestations afford the best kind of literary material—that they are the very brood of awe and wonder and mystical predominance.

Ghosts are the most natural, the simplest, of the spirit tribes. The human being desires or dreads companionship with the departed, and the Appearance comes. Or more frequently the Apparition is driven to walk the earth to expiate crimes committed there, or to relieve itself of the burden of some secret. The ancients had such a fully equipped establishment of spiritual agencies that they did not have much recourse to ghosts. And these were too tame and gentle for the demonologists of the Dark Ages. Shakespeare really did most to propel them into literature. The ghost in Hamlet, Banquo's spirit, the apparition

tions that rose before Richard, these established the standing of the family in literature.

The opposition between Good and Evil in the world was largely the origin of Demonology. People saw plainly enough that Evil usually had the upper hand, so they proceeded to worship or propitiate its deities. Europe kept a huge standing army of these things on foot for centuries, reaching from Beelzebub himself down to the humblest gnome or elf, with witches and warlocks for their human intermediaries. The Djinns, Afreets, Genii, Ghouls of Persia and Arabia, were an allied race. Folk-lore and popular legend are full of such imaginations, and Goethe has pictured their Olympus in *Faust*.

Magicians, miracle-workers, interpreters of signs, infest all ages. Such were the Enchanters who failed before Aaron, or the Magi who had to give place to Daniel. The early men of science were not only accounted miracle-workers by the populace, but themselves struggled to acquire occult powers. Pythagoras, Empedocles, Apollonius of Tyana, Paracelsus, Friar Bacon, and even in recent times Mesmer and Cagliostro, were probably half impostors, half seekers for the truth. The whole spirit of such personages is summed up in fiction by the single figure of Faust. Dumas's *Memoirs of a Physician* is an immense and amusing explication of it.

Gods are an integral part of the greatest literature. In the big times of poetry, writers began from Jove and not from their neighbour in a street-

car. And audiences took it as a compliment to themselves to see divinities fighting, or conversing with or making love to their own ancestors. The vast elemental mythologies of India or Greece or Scandinavia tell yet on our imaginations. They tell more profoundly than anything that can be devised today. It cannot too often be repeated that religion and philosophy and literature are one. They are synonymous terms for the same thing. Religion is sometimes the text, philosophy the comment, and literature the visualizing agency; but sometimes one precedes and sometimes another. The theogony of Hesiod came after the creation of Homer. The hymns of the Rig-Veda, the Upanishads, and the Hindu epics followed in unknown order; but they are all literature, and all religion, and all philosophy. The vast Catholic mythology was built up with scant reference to the Scriptures.

The religious principles which have to do with death and the hereafter, the ideas of resurrection and immortality, have their philosophic counterparts in Plato's Theory of Ideas and the Hindu thought of Maya or Illusion. But the philosophical schemes are comparatively barren for literature, whereas the religious ones burst out into creation everywhere. The final scenes of the *Mahabharata*, the episodes in the Greek and Latin poets dealing with Hades and Elysium, and, final summation of the whole, Dante's great poem, testify to the fruitfulness of those ideas.

Multiplicity rather than unity is the ruling

spirit of literature. It must have opposing forces, strife, varied pictures of life. The tribal systems of Indian cosmogony, the dualism of Zoroaster, the delicately divided mythology of Greece, are all conformable to its laws. Even when it gets a pure monotheism like the Jewish, it proceeds as quickly as possible to transform it into a dualism and then into a trinity of good opposed to multiple powers of evil. For this reason, the Buddhistic idea of Nirvana can work little good for literature. There is a question whether the true doctrine of Nirvana is annihilation, or only resumption into God and the being freed from the pain of new birth. The latter interpretation is probably the Hindu one, while European thinkers who have accepted the doctrine—Schopenhauer above all—lean to the first. It is obvious that neither branch of this principle has any possibilities of literary growth and efflorescence.

Modern science is also in some sense paralysing to literature. When it discovers myriads of organized creatures in a drop of water, and divides these again unto infinity into atoms and units of force the human imagination is appalled and dismayed. Similarly, when it shows us streams of stars, clouds of *nebulæ*, universe upon universe, floating like bubbles on the bosom of ether—which substance itself is like death, a negation, yet the most potent thing there is—we may be inspired, but it is with an inspiration which cannot realize itself in concrete terms.

In beginning this series of brief inquiries into

222 The Master Note in Literature

the root-ideas of fiction, I said that all literature is built up from a few scraps of nature and human experience. This is not to say that it is, in its results, simple. Many, perhaps most, writers have a predilection for a certain set of impressions, a certain sphere of action or thought. They write love lyrics, and they think that love lyrics are the whole of poetry; they photograph contemporary life, and they insist that such work is all that is worth doing. But if from the twoscore or more of syllabled sounds all the languages of the world have been built up, if from the eighty simple elements there is made the whole universe, what are the possibilities of scheme and combination with the individual units of the human race? The count of those that are or have been rise in their myriads to numbers beyond name. Yet no two have been alike. Each human being has viewed and reflected the universe at a different angle and has been shuffled among his compeers in a different way. The possibilities of character and situation and plot are practically limitless.

THE ANALYTIC METHOD

AS one cannot set a trap to catch fame, so one cannot by mere taking thought do much in literature. Personality, experience, inspiration are the great factors in genius. The glowing soul, the wide knowledge, the direct fire from heaven, these are an author's best equipment. But where these exist in some measure, they can be eked out and supported by the conscious work of the mind—by analysis, selection, adjustment of parts to the whole. It is precisely in the Greeks virtues of clearness, proportion, design—and consequent effectiveness, that modern writers in general fail. They have genius enough, they have immense experience, but they simply tear out huge fragments from the life of the world and cast them down before us as completed works of art. I should name them poets of chaos. Tolstoi's vast novel, *War and Peace*, is not as effective, to my mind at least, as a single short Greek tragedy. The whole work of Zola is not as impressive and significant to me as one of Poe's brief tales. The fact that recent literature instinctively chooses the disorganized medley of prose as its medium of expression, rather than the disciplined array of verse, is evidence of its chaotic bent. What its

chiefs try for, of course, is truth. They claim to give us in words the exact equivalent of human existence and the world. As if they could! As if a book of ten thousand pages could chronicle the minute facts of one man's life, let alone those of all the people with whom he comes in contact or the phenomena of the world which affect him. Selection there must be, and why then should not selection be consciously guided to make a work of art with meaning, significance, beauty, and power. The high *a priori* road of logic, analysis, deduction, design, will lead an author to these ends, provided, of course, he carry with him the passport of creative force.

Leaving out lyric poetry, which is primarily a pure gush of emotion, the contents of most works of literature may be considered under these heads:—theme, plot, situations, characters, tone, and style.

Theme is the totality of the thing to be expressed. Many pieces of literature are without any definite theme. All that we can say is that their theme is human life. This was practically the answer Goethe gave to the critics who bothered him about the subject of *Wilhelm Meister*. In other works, and these are perhaps the majority, two or more themes are woven or blended together.

The artist may not be conscious, or may be but vaguely conscious, what the theme is he is developing. Æschylus may not have been aware that his *Prometheus* means the eternal rebellion of the free spirit against law, even beneficent law.

Byron may not have known that his *Childe Harold* expressed much the same thing. However, whatever we find in a work of art belongs to the poet who put it there whether he intended it or not.

An artist, too, may begin determinately with one theme, and, by the wayward wind of genius, find it turning in his hands into another, perhaps a reverse one. There can be little doubt that Cervantes started out merely to ridicule books of chivalry in his *Don Quixote*, but being himself the greatest knight-errant of the world his theme developed into a contrast between nobility and the vulgar. Milton announces his theme with a flourish of trumpets. He is going to justify the works of God to man—but in the end he comes near justifying the devil.

The use of a theme is to give roundness and completeness to a work of art—to endow it with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Man has a sense of perfection, finality, and when any piece of literature expresses, sums up, some permanent fact of nature or human nature, the work is like to be permanent too. Gray's *Elegy* expresses with splendour and magnificence the doom of splendour and magnificence. Fitz Gerald's *Omar* is the Bible of the bibulous—a musical descant on "What's the Use?" Larger works, too, express some general thing—Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea* shows the indomitable will of man conquering the treacherous, the illimitable, the all but omnipotent ocean. Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea* is a hymn to home. Shakespeare's comedies are

varying flashes from the facets of the jewel of Joy. The greatest works of literature, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Faust*, *The Divine Comedy*, contain so many themes, so intricately blended, that it has been and will be for centuries the task of critics to pick them out.

The present writer has suggested elsewhere the feasibility of forming categories of fiction, so that all possible themes may be arranged under a few heads. Identity, hunger, love, and death are the genera of subjects he has tried to elucidate. But other sets of categories might easily be framed for the guidance of writers. Or they may quite as well throw all such rather mechanical schemes aside and return boldly to the themes of their boyhood essays. Hope, courage, resignation, youth, age—all the abstractions—these were what we were wont to write about, and if anyone can express such ideas in terms of human character and environment, or can, similarly, give final realization in words to such material matters as the forest, the desert, the clouds, the sea, and so forth—he will go near to being a great writer.

Plot is the vehicle for carrying on the theme. It is a stock saying that there are only seven distinct jokes in the world, and I don't know if there are many more plots. Great books reiterate each other with unblushing plagiarism. The plot of the *Iliad* bears a surprising resemblance to that of the *Rāmāyana*, and the Irish epics of Cuchulain and Déirdre are like both. The Hindu and Greek and Scandinavian and Celtic gods might

change places and no one could distinguish them in the shuffle. What indeed is there of difference in the lives of men? A man is born, is educated, marries, works, comes into money, travels, grows great or miserable, dies. This is the formula which we must transmute into the myriad combinations of art.

Myths, popular legends, folk-lore, stories that linger about the countryside, furnish the best materials for plots. This is because they have been worked and reworked by the common imagination of the race. They have suffered recension after recension until they have become harmonized, their salencies brought out, their crudities repressed and a great wealth of ideas gathered to them. The individual author who invents his own plot ought to submit it to something of the same treatment, by turning it over in his mind, brooding over it, and trying the effect of this or that alteration. Plots taken direct from actual life—or from history—are, as a rule, raw, stiff, and unnatural. They are not probable enough.

A well-built detective story, like one of Wilkie Collins's great four, is really the model of good plot work. This is because we see undisguised in such a piece the logical faculty at work; realize the prevision that looks before and after and shapes the thing. The skeleton that supports the frame is revealed beneath the covering of flesh. Such a skeleton must exist in all works of art which are not gelatinous or amorphous. The author should know his *dénouement* before he begins: every in-

cident should be a step towards the end. Probably the greatest number of modern novelists have neglected plot and wreaked themselves upon character or incident or expression. The development of character may indeed stand in lieu of the development of plot; but it is best to have both, as have the great models—the Greek tragedies. Tolstoi, whose huge and formless works are the very antithesis of all I have been describing, makes an attempt, in *Anna Karenina*, to bind together the scattered fragments of his plot by one significant incident. Anna first meets her lover on descending from a railway train which has just killed a flagman. At the end of the book she meets her death by throwing herself under a train in the same place. This effort at fate pre-figuration is so feeble, and so opposed to the whole turn of the story, that I cannot but think it a false note.

Situations are not merely the incidents of the plot; they are the culminating crises, the moments when the opposed forces of the piece are brought face to face, the scenes when things happen. A good brief direction for authors would be this: get an atmosphere, get a climax, and get done. Such climaxes should be led up to carefully, and made imaginatively probable, which is a very different thing from the actual truth. The appearance of Dimmesdale on the scaffold in the *Scarlet Letter*, is a magnificent example of a climax coherently and legitimately worked out. But the true dramatist or novelist will sacrifice everything, even imaginative truth, to a great situation. Shake-

speare does it again and again in *Richard the Third*, notably in the wooing of Lady Anne over the coffin of her husband. The poet knew that the great effect of the scene would carry the beholder or reader away and make him excuse the weakness or falsity of the means used to produce it.

Character in analysis is with us throughout literature. It is abundant, it is cheap, and when we can't get any better it is quite satisfactory. Such are the characters generally of Greek and Latin comedy—the bragging captain, the parasite, the intriguing slave. Such are Ben Jonson's "humours," his Bobadil, Kiteley, Mosca, and others. Such are the characters in Restoration and post-Restoration dramas which are created out of an adjective or a noun: Sparkle, Scandal, Lady Sneerwell, Lord Foppington, Charles Surface. Such are the characters in antithesis of Dryden and Pope's satires—Buckingham, Shaftesbury, Villiers, Addison. Such are the characters, though more disguised, which flourish in the pages of George Eliot, where weakness poses as a man in Tito Melema, and vanity as a woman in Rosamond Vincy.

Of course all such character creation is of an inferior kind. When an artist explains his personages to us, either by means of dissection and vivisection, or by the simpler method of attaching the label of a name, our curiosity about them is at an end. They are simply machines which have been taken apart, toys out of which the sawdust has extruded. The real figures of fiction are pro-

jections of their creator's brooding consciousness or mirror-like reflections of his sympathy. Whether they "wrap themselves in mystery" like Hamlet or show in transparent clearness like Marguerite, they are equally as real and as unexplainable as life itself.

There are really only two ways in which a character can be made to stand on his feet—can be realized. These are by what it does and by what it says. Physical descriptions are generally ineffective and explanations of motives and intentions are still more so. If an author wishes to convince me that his heroine is charming or witty let him make her do and say charming and witty things. If he wants to create a villain let him show me the man at work. The reader is the judge, not the author, and for the latter to take part for or against any of his personages, is fatal. The dramatist has far the advantage of the novelist here, for, except in soliloquies, he is under no temptation to turn his characters' minds inside out.

Tone is the key to which a piece of literature is modulated—the lighting of the stage whereon its scene is set. A landscape is one thing under the chilly gleam of dawn, another under the full pulsating sunlight of mid-day, a third in the crimson flush of sunset; it is still different in half obliterating twilight or in the night and storm with the momentary torches of the lightning burning or extinguishing above it. The final effect of almost every piece of literature depends on its

tone, keeping, atmosphere, harmony of light or shadow. What would *Wuthering Heights* be without its pitch and intensity of shadow, unrelieved, except at the last moment, by a glimpse of light? What would *Macbeth* be without its truth of keeping? Or *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* without their sunny perfection of atmosphere? It is conceivable that any literary work might be taken bodily—plot, characters, names, and all—and if set to another key, plunged into a different light, it would be such a new thing that the original maker would not recognize his own creation. A famous instance of just such a transformation exists in the treatment of the Orestes story by the three Greek tragedians. In Æschylus Orestes is very much to the front and the play is high-pitched and heroic. In Sophocles Orestes and Electra are about equal in interest and the piece is purely human. In Euripides Electra takes the centre of the stage and the tragedy is domestic, not to say *bourgeois*.

Style, I think, consists of two parts, quality of thought and weight of thought. Quality of thought is innate, hardly to be acquired. It is a writer's soul expressing itself after its nature—as, gay, sombre, easy, tortuous, charming, terrible. Weight of thought consists simply of terseness and concentration of language and the accumulation and importance of ideas. All this may be acquired by study and effort. For example, Lord Bacon has immense weight of thought but not much quality. Oliver Goldsmith has the most

engaging quality of thought in everything he wrote, but nowhere any great weight. Or let me give a passage from one of the very gods of expression, who unites quality and weight of thought in his rich style—let me quote from John Keats:

“As when upon a tranced summer night,
Those green-robed senators of ancient woods,
Tall oaks, branch charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from some gradual, solitary gust,
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave;—
So came his voice and went.”

This has Keats's special quality of sensuousness and harmony, but it has high intellectual weight as well. Consider the assemblage of images and thoughts which are brought together to body forth an oak forest. The actual meaning of the passage is simply this: “As when upon a summer night the oaks are still save for some gust which comes and dies away.” But to Keats it is a “tranced night,” not dead nor sleeping, but something between. The trees are “green-robed senators of ancient woods,” which flashes upon our minds a compound picture of Rome's Conscript Fathers and the Druidic temples. But the oaks are “branch charmed” and we see the “earnest stars” above them at their witchcraft. And so they dream in the silence until one solitary gust comes upon them and dies away like one ebbing wave of the great ocean of air.

It is hardly necessary to say that such accumulations of metaphor and picture as in the above are not indispensable to weight of style. The most simple statement, in its proper place, may have a thrust and power beyond the capacity of adjectives or images to equal. The "Prythee undo this button" of Lear; the "I wailed not, so of stone I grew within" of Dante; or Marguerite's first answer to Faust are instances of simple expressions pregnant with meaning.

ON TEACHING LITERATURE

ALL sciences and special branches of knowledge can be taught, because they are limited in their nature and have definite rules and methods; but to teach literature is a good deal like trying to teach life itself. One can only know life by instinct and experience. A class in literature must be a good deal like an aviary in which some one is endeavouring to introduce order and discipline. The birds' minds are so various, the air-paths and the perches are so numerous and alluring, that the drill-master can hardly help having a hard time. The converse of the rule about toadstools and mushrooms is true of students: if books bore or poison you, you are not a reader; if you can digest them, you are. The born reader, even with the slightest learning, has an almost infallible instinct. He or she will never make the mistake of Charles Lamb's Stamp Collector, who asked him if he did not think Milton was a great poet. He or she will never exasperate you by suggesting that the last novelist has put the world's literature into eclipse.

But the born diviners are few, and the majority of students need guidance and are willing to accept it. If it ever fell to my lot to conduct a class in

literature, I think I should begin by placing in every pupil's hands a copy of Leigh Hunt's little compilation, *Imagination and Fancy*. The Introduction to this work is of no great value,—or, at least, the ideas in it can be better gathered from their originals in Coleridge. But the selections form a small body of the most intensely poetical pieces and passages in the language. And Hunt, by his system of italicizing the most perfect phrases and expressions, by his notes of ungrudging admiration, is continually at the student's elbow, to explain, illumine, make vivid, the wonders of the text. It would be a poor pupil who, from the study of such a work, would not come to realize that literature is a fine art—that its medium is words, and that these words are capable of melodies, harmonies, tints, colours, tone, and sculptural outline in infinite and almost ineffable combination. The power of rendering by language the exact qualities of things, of giving in essential extract the forms and hues of life and nature, and of hinting at the interrelation and spiritual significance of these matters, is the primary concern of literature. With some poets and prose writers, expression is all in all; and with many readers it is so fascinating that they care for nothing else.

From these studies in the near and the minute, I should jump my students at once to the consideration of the large and the remote. I should place before them, using English translations or recensions, the great early epics of earth's different

racés—the Icelandic sagas, the *Niebelungenlied*, the Celtic legends, and the great Hindu epics. These works differ greatly in their qualities of expression, in their verbal felicity. The *Niebelungenlied*, perhaps the largest canvas of human action ever painted, is done in a rambling, garrulous style, in a jog-trot metre. The Icelandic sagas are terse and vivid, but they are travellers' tales, having little ordered art, and being the germs of poems rather than full poetic works. The Irish and Welsh legends have had an immense amount of art spent upon them in their varied recensions, and they are often splendidly beautiful in detail; but in them the genius of the race has seemed to lack balance and measure. The same thing may be said of the Hindu epics. But all of these works have in common greatness of design and creative fire; and it is as necessary that the student of literature should get it into his head that these qualities are admirable as that he should learn to appreciate perfect form. They one and all shadow forth a world that is based indeed on our world, but rises above this like a mirage. They project figures that bear the semblance of humanity, but are larger, more tremendous, more significant than merely human characters. They involve the cosmogonies—the hopes and fears, the thoughts and intuitions, of mankind in its freshest stage of imagination. It is certainly a great gain to any student's vivacity and richness of mind when he can be interested in the Hindu Lucifer, Ravana, who stood for ten thousand years on his head (he

had three of them, so he may have varied the exercise), and thereby acquired so much merit that the gods could not prevail against him; or when he can understand and take seriously the story of Thor nearly emptying the ocean by three draughts of a drinking-horn; or when he can accept Cuchulain's single-handed fight against an immense army. Such creations, while they are projections of single characters, have the concentrated significance of types. They compare with the figures in modern novels, which are also pictures of humanity, as gold coins compare with bank notes. These may have the same face value, but the notes soon become dirty and torn, and are discarded; whereas the coins keep their lustre and edge and intrinsic value for centuries.

After the lessons of form and the lessons of design had sunk into my pupils' minds, then, and not until then, I should put before them accepted masterpieces of literature in which creation and execution go hand in hand. It is unnecessary to enumerate them—and, indeed, for school purposes a small selection from any one of the three supreme poets, Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare—would be sufficient to indicate what literature can do at its best. In any one of Shakespeare's most perfect plays, for instance, what faculties, what qualities, what miracles of vision and execution, combine to produce the total effect! No single gift is there, but a complex of powers which it would be a fascinating though perhaps not very useful study to unravel and separate.

Absolute realization, transcendent power,—these are the main goals of literature. Speech, in its commonest use, is an ever-recurring miracle; but as used by the great masters to rival the concrete, to realize the abstract, to fix fleeting nature and life, it is the wonder of wonders. And the creative power of design, which on the basis of nature and life builds the empires of the imagination, is even more godlike.

Something analogous to this division of literature exists in painting. From the first, artists seem to have been separated into two opposed camps: those who could realize, render, paint; and those who could draw, design, tell stories. The one body was mainly concerned with the rendering of planes, modified of course by tint and colour; the other was chiefly interested in expressing ideas by means of lines. The Greek paintings that have come down to us in vase decorations are of the latter class; they have purity of line and tint, but they do not seek to reproduce nature, and they do illustrate legends and express ideas. The great Greek painters, however, Zeuxis and Apelles, were, if we may trust the legends about them, renderers. They sought to imitate nature; they painted what they saw. In more recent times, Angelo, Raphael, Tintoretto, Poussin, Reynolds, David, and a great part of the English school, were designers, illustrators. And on the other side, Titian, Rembrandt, Velasquez, nearly the whole Dutch school, and Gainsborough, were painters, reproducers of nature. Both kinds

of art are legitimate,—they are equally important, but it is curious that those who can paint despise design, while those who can design rarely render with the felicity and perfection of the others. It is the difference between the sensuous and intellectual faculties of man.

There is no such decisive separation of these faculties, no such war of armed camps, in literature as in painting. It is difficult to use words at all without conveying ideas or telling a story—without exhibiting some quality of design. Here and there a poet or a prose-writer has succeeded in striking out impressions of nature, or rapturous musical tones, to which it is difficult to attach a coherent meaning. Perhaps Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* and Poe's *Ulalume* are the supreme examples, in our literature at least, of such scenic or atmospheric renditions. They may signify anything or nothing. On the other hand, writers who have anything at all to say have usually been able to say it in more or less felicitous words. But the distinction remains between the two orders of minds; it is symbolized in the two opposed pairs, Goethe and Schiller, Keats and Shelley. Some writers pass through all the phases of the two gifts. Shakespeare began life intoxicated by words and images. He yielded himself up as a pure medium for life to express itself—as a mirror to reflect all the hues and objects about him. Gradually the intellectual predominated, and at the top of his career he seems almost to have disdained the vehicle of language, and, like Velasquez at the

last, "painted with the will alone." The same progression is observable in Milton, from the sensuousness of his earlier poems to the severe outlines of the *Samson*.

But to return to my class of students whom I left hanging in the air. There are two more matters I should like to impress upon them: first, the importance of the individual, the personal, in writers or creative artists; and, second, the universality or constant recurrence of the master-moods of mankind which seek expression in literature. The writer's personality constitutes his originality. It is what he adds to the common stock. It is what differentiates him from others. No two artists can have the same view of human life or nature; no two are started with exactly the same impetus, or meet with the same resistance. As a result, their work down to the very motion of their prose or verse, is different. Hereby it comes that we would recognize a scene of Shakespeare's or a passage of Milton's if we met them in the middle of the desert of Sahara. All art worth the name has this quality of uniqueness, of singularity.

But on the other hand, as the main experiences of mankind are, after all, limited in number, are common to all, it comes about that literature must repeat, reiterate, recast, the same matter. The joys, hopes, sorrows, fears, aspirations, and despairs of men must reappear in new guise in every age's art. Hence the parallels, similarities, revivals, and imitations in literature. The same general conditions compel the same kind of work. The

Athenian drama, rising out of the heroic period of the Greek race, based upon religion, patriotism, art-zeal, finds itself echoed in the great English and Spanish theatres. The courtly verse of the Augustan age is paralleled by that of the epochs of Louis XIV. and Queen Anne. The moods and manners and fashions of men change indeed, but they change in circles, and they are always finding themselves back in the same spot.

When I had got my class in literature thus far, I should dismiss it, sure that the twist or bent of each member would carry him too far in some direction, and that catholicity of judgment would be left only for those who did not need any instruction at all.

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF THE ELDER MR. WELLER

“ I TOOK a great deal o’ pains with his eddication, sir; let him run in the streets when he was wery young and shift for hisself.” The brilliant result of that course of training was the character who supplies most of the wit and common sense of *The Pickwick Papers*. And, it may be added in passing, the education of the creator of that character was carried out almost on the same plan.

It is a dangerous ideal, perhaps; but it begins to look as though mankind would have to revert to it, in defence of the young who under the present educational system are so assisted and pampered and petted that they cannot stand alone; who, like Strasburg geese, are stuffed with carefully prepared learning until the only result to them is enlarged and languid livers. In the United States, at least, it is apparent that we are not getting the value we ought from our enormous expenditure for education. We are not getting value in the happiness and prosperity of the people at large, nor in the production of great men, whose flowering seems to be almost the final purpose of human existence.

For the first of these contentions we may point to the recent pinch of high prices which has reduced the standard of living all over the land. After every other explanation that can be offered for the rise in the cost of living, the fact remains that our educational system has been turning out far too many people who want to live by their wits (of course in an honourable sense), and left far too few who are willing to live by their hands. The inhabitants of the Scilly Islands are said to live by taking in each other's wash; but surely we cannot all get an income by doctoring each other's infirmities, pleading each other's law cases, or criticizing each other's criticism.

That our recent rage for education has not been favourable to the production or maintenance of genius, may be regarded by a democracy as a good thing. Certain nations, England for instance, have been hardly more than plants for the manufacture of great men. We may possibly say that we do not want any more of that. If nature has been so unjust as to privilege certain minds, it is our business to even things up and give everybody a chance. And in politics, at least, our late lack of stars of the first lustre is due to lack of opportunity. We cannot have great generals without great wars, or mighty statesmen without mighty issues. It is difficult for the people themselves to take a deep heart-interest in the tariff, and we cannot expect politicians to rise to greatness on the wings of *ad valorem* duties. But in the arts and sciences there is no such excuse, and it is generally regarded that,

244 Educational System of Mr. Weller

"Our builders are with want of genius cursed,
The second temple is not like the first."

If we have pre-eminent stars in these fields, they are lost in the Milky Way of mediocrity.

What is education? Goethe said that the longer he lived the more he believed in the qualities born in men and the less he cared for those that are acquired or stuck on. We cannot educe or draw out of people something that they have not in them. Unless all history is at fault, really great parts are sparsely distributed, and when they do occur they are just as likely to be drawn out by the contact with life, the struggle to exhibit themselves, as by an ordered and overlooked course of training. Emerson thought it was better for a young man to be thrown into a vortex of exciting action and to be made to swim, than for him to go through college. We need not be afraid that talent will fail of learning. The real workman will get at his tools. Lincoln will walk forty miles for his copy of *Plutarch* and will study it by the pine-knot fire. Whitney will invent his cotton-gin though he never saw a cotton field in his life. The electric spark of genius is developed by resistance. Men are much like mules; if you want them to enter a certain field you must fence them out of it.

Widespread education is certainly unfavourable to the development of genius or remarkable talent. Greatness, as it were, is put in commission. As every one has a little tincture of talent, no one is allowed to possess a monopoly. There is a story of a Roman poet under the Empire who sent some

verses to a rich man whom he wished to secure for a patron. The latter returned them with the comment that he himself wrote poetry and did not admit that anyone save Homer was his superior. We have taught everybody to write verses, and poetry is despised. Colleges, High Schools, and Correspondence Courses are making every man his own artist and architect and engineer, so that the world will soon be able to do without the professional product altogether.

If the loss to the world were only the obelizing and obliteration of genius we might let it pass. Perhaps mankind may learn to do without genius. Perhaps the mariner by some new trained instinct for locality may be able to dispense with compass and lighthouses. But education seems to be robbing the masses of the power to appreciate the products of education. The comment is on everyone's tongue that the world of today has but a languid interest in things of the mind. There is probably three times as much effort and bustle and fuss about education now, proportionately, as there was sixty years ago. Yet there was proportionately ten times as much mental alertness then. Then were the palmy days of the drama. The tragedies of Shakespeare and Schiller and Hugo met with an appreciation and applause that they do not begin to receive now. The same class of audiences today flock to the moving-picture shows. Then the actor's art was in its zenith. Great players drew after them more than a third part of the population. Then literature was a

matter of universal interest. The latest oracle from Concord was discussed everywhere; the blue and gold editions of Longfellow and Whittier were in most households; Dickens could make a triumphal tour through the country. Then our artists received prices for canvases which are the despair of painters of today. Then music and dancing, as exemplified by Jenny Lind and Taglioni, created an enthusiasm that is difficult to imagine now. And of course the politics of those times were far more tremendous than ours. Looking back, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that our people were far more vividly alive then than they are today. Possibly many causes have contributed to the deadening of our sensibilities; but one of these causes, at least, must be the extension of education.

The amount of education which the average person takes, which enters his system and becomes a part of him, is very small. How many men who went through college thirty years ago can do a problem of Euclid or construe a sentence of Greek or a paragraph of Latin? The Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Lord Rayleigh, in a recent speech said: "I rejoice in the number of successful mathematicians which our University graduates, but I cannot help wondering what becomes of them all in general society. It is rare to meet anyone who has any knowledge of science, and I might say even of arithmetic. I remember a few years ago being stopped in the street by an acquaintance who had lived some while in India,

and I think was getting out statistics on Indian affairs, who told me that he had been on the point of writing to me to know whether I could recommend someone to him who could do a calculation for him. I said, 'Well, what sort of a calculation is it?' He said: 'Only a rule of three. I cannot do it myself and I cannot find anybody who can do it. Perhaps among your acquaintances of the scientific world you might know somebody who could help me.'" The fact is, the main difference between most educated and uneducated men is that the former know of the existence of certain provinces of learning of which the latter are ignorant. They have, like Moses, been taken up on a height and shown the Promised Land, but they have declined the ordeal of conquering it. But as the young woman in Molière's play says, "It is understood here that we all speak Greek."

Of course each of the several professions, arts, and sciences requires a special training without which it cannot be successfully practised. But the contention is, in the first place, that we are turning out too many practitioners of these branches of learning to give them all the thorough training they should have; and, in the second place, that in the eye of absolute truth many of these sciences are "not what they are cracked up to be." Their votaries quarrel so much among themselves, expose so much of the hollowness of their respective mysteries, that common people begin to believe it is better to be ignorant than to know a great deal that is not so.

The higher education of women, though by no means the new thing it is supposed to be, has probably had a wider extension than ever before. Some authorities are concerned over the physical effect of intense application to study by women. In exceptional cases their fears may be justified, but there is something in the nature of women that will generally prevent their taking much harm from education. They stand for the individual, the instinctive, and refuse to be formalized and flattened out and drilled and trained as men permit themselves to be. Bhavabhuti, a Hindu poet of twelve centuries ago, put an eternal truth in a couplet:

"Nature itself gives women wit;
Men learn from books a little bit."

What, then, is the moral of these rather rambling remarks? This: that we are forcing the season in education in America and getting a hothouse product rather than a hardy natural growth. That there should be a universal diffusion of the elements of education no one doubts. But here the State should stop. Whatever more is wanted should be left to the free initiative of the individual. People rarely value what they get for nothing. In the matter of manual training, it might be well to return to the apprentice system, in both the shop and the farm. And the gathering of all kinds and degrees of workers into guilds, for inspiration, appreciation, and support, might be encouraged. From such associations has come much of the best work of the world.

THE WEATHER IN LITERATURE

CALVERLEY thought that if such brave rhymes of the olden time as "weather" and "together" were bundled up and carted away, there would be fewer volumes of verse. If the weather itself were to be eliminated from literature, both prose and verse would show lacunæ almost as great as the space between the stars is to the stars themselves. The weather is the chief subject of human interest and intercourse. We begin every conversation with propitiatory or damnatory remarks about it. We study its signs and signal its arrival or departure as though it were a royal guest. And rightly; for on the weather depends our harvests, our healths, our intellects, and our complexions. Whether we are Caucasian or Negro depends upon the intensity of our suns. Whether we are energetic or languid depends upon the quality of our atmosphere. We are all servile to the skyey influences.

A railroad train hurtles straight to the west and the sinking sun, like an arrow towards a shield. In a meadow at one side, a herd of horses breaks into frightened flight. A bird darts upward, singing as though it would burst its breast. A young

girl, in whose eyes sleep the visions and images of the future, looks out from a cottage porch. All these varying forms of force draw their power from yonder reddened orb about to be obscured.

Nothing exists, that we can apprehend, but the human spirit and the weather. All the phenomena of nature are only more advanced and stationary stages of weather. Spring belts the world with a band of blossoms which resembles the delicate or daring hues of dawn. The green mantle of summer re-echoes the blue of cloudless skies; and autumn, with its purples and yellows and reds, mocks the sunset fires. The rivers and lakes and oceans are only a thicker kind of mist. The mountains themselves are but secular clouds. If we could imagine a slow-lived being to whom centuries were but as our moments, we could think of him watching the eternal hills heaving and changing and crumbling away, just as we watch the storm-clouds of our atmosphere.

Every age is conceited about some one thing above the rest,—usually with little cause. The age of Louis XIV. thought it had perfected polite civilization. The age of the French Revolution thought it had discovered Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Our age has been prouder, perhaps, of patronizing Nature than of anything else. Yet the Greeks studied natural effects with keener eyes than ours. The Romans were as much in love with country life as we are. Their villas were scattered all around the Mediterranean and among Alpine and Apennine hills. And under the

early Christian régime, every dell and desert place had its hermit. Perhaps Ruskin is right in thinking that neither of these races cared much for the higher mountain solitudes or the gloom of deep woods. But our Aryan ancestors or relatives who poured across the Himalayas were familiar with heights to which the mountains of Europe were molehills. They knew intimately forests to which our stateliest woods are toad-holes compared to temples. Their earliest gods were purely incarnations of physical phenomena,—Indra of the sky, Surya of the sun, Agni of fire itself: the Shining Ones these. It was not until later that this triad became metaphysicized into Vishnu, Brahma, and Siva. The Maruts were the storm-gods. The Apsaras and Gandharvas were the clouds turned into beautiful and friendly maidens and attendant youths. And from the woods arose dreadful Rakshasas, demons who contended not unequally with the golden gods.

The difference between the ancients' way of viewing Nature and our own is simply that they saw physical phenomena alive, animated with will and thought and passion; whereas we see them a mere catalogue of dead things. We are content to assume that intellect belongs to man alone, just as if we were absolutely certain that an oak-tree has no intelligence, or that the ocean does not know what it is about when it rises in rage and dashes our vessels down to shipwreck. For the purposes of literature, at any rate, the old beliefs were better than ours. Where we only see a round

ball blazing in the sky and cooking mankind with its fiery rays, they saw the angry Apollo striding from his Olympian halls with the bow in his hand and the arrows rattling on his shoulders. Where we only hear the thunder crashing through the sky, they saw the terrible King of Gods lifting his majestic head and hurling the bolts from his right hand. Where we only see the level floor of the ocean, they saw sleek Panope and all her sisters playing upon it. We think we have got at the causes of things,—but really we do not know why different seeds produce each after its own kind, or why carbon and hydrogen combine in various proportions to form organic substances. Why should not our elements or atoms or electrons be the sentient forebears of many conscious races which unite, marry, oppose, or strive with each other, and in certain of their exhibitions arise to a divinity beyond the reach of man?

But of course it is nonsense to suppose that modern literature has done away with the supernatural. Gods and goddesses sprung from and guiding the processes of Nature, and interfering in the affairs of men, have to some extent been driven off. But their place has been taken by angels, devils, witches, fairies, ghosts, and a thousand other forms of spiritual life. More important still, modern writers have given a soul to inanimate things; they have brought Nature into sympathy with man, they have harmonized their backgrounds with the action of the central figures, they have invented tone in literature or at least

have practised it to a far greater extent than the ancients.

It is recorded of the late Queen Victoria, that she objected to what she called "dark" plays—meaning pieces where the backgrounds were sombre and the lighting obscure. It is creditable to her critical instinct that she divined the fact of there being such a totality of effect. The majority of writers have never made a guess at it. Where tone is apparent at all in literature, it may be divided into dark or bright effects, or a mingling and contrast of the two.

Macbeth is probably the most magnificent sombre tone-piece in literature. There are high lights in it, but they are awe-inspiring, unearthly, hellish. From the windy, cloudy sunset on the heath (it is sunset, for Macbeth says, "So fair and foul a day I have not seen") to the storm and lightning that presage and accompany the murder, to the fires and boiling cauldrons of the Witches' cave, to the ghostlike Lady Macbeth with her solitary candle, all the lights only accentuate the gloom and horror, the outward and inward tumult of the play.

Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor* is keyed to a twilight melancholy rather than a stormy night. There is an autumnal haze about it through which the gaunt trees of the Master's lost estate, his dilapidated house, and even its grim steward of starvation, Caleb Balderstone, show half spectral and unreal. It is only in the dreadfully hinted story of the bridal night, and the Master's death

in the ravening sands, that the thing leaps into tragedy.

Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* has two centres of light—the Maypole Inn and the Varden household. Around these whirl and surge the shadows of the story—the mysteries of the murder, Barnaby and his raven, that uncanny modern Caliban, Hugh, the Gordon riots, and all the rest of the gloomy turmoil. Good as these things are, and whether Dickens intended it or not, they only serve to isolate and bring out the lighted parts of the picture, which by contrast acquire an inexpressible charm. It is doubtful if Dickens ever painted anything with more mellow depth of tone than the Maypole Inn. Its wide hospitable spread of wings without, its cosy snugness within, its host and his crowd of village cronies, give the very sentiment and soul of inn-life once for all. And the companion picture, the household of the jolly locksmith, is all sparkle and vivacity, culminating in the rosy cheeks and many-coloured garb of Dolly herself. Coming upon either of these scenes out of the darkness that surrounds them is like happening upon a camp-fire in a forest at night. The great black tree-boles encircle it, the foliage keeps even the starlight away, but there on the shadow-sifted sward is a little heart of warmth and comfort.

There is probably no piece of pure sunlight in literature so perfect as Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. It is hardly real sunlight, hardly even the sunlight of Greek poetry; it is a half enchanted

sunlight that turns even the ugly or the common to favour and prettiness. In the *Merchant of Venice* there is more contrast; dark passions and stormy scenes intervene, making the play more picturesque and less serenely beautiful: but in the end all the jarring elements are hushed into perfect peace and rest.

This adjustment of environment and lighting to human action—the interpenetration of nature and man—which I have called tone, is present in Greek literature mainly by fits and starts. I cannot recall any single piece, except perhaps the *Bacchanals* of Euripides, where it is a predominant technical quality. In the night-raid of Diomed, in the *Iliad*, in the Nausikaa scenes of the *Odyssey*, there is the perfection of tone; but these passages are far from giving the keynotes of either poem. And similarly with the Dido episode in the *Æneid*, and the hero's descent into the underworld. They are only two of the many quite discordant elements out of which Virgil's poem is made. If we consider Dante's great work to be three separate poems, we shall find each of them marvellously toned to one predetermined effect. The black air of hell, lit by the red towers of Dis, lit by the fiery pyres of the sentenced sinners, lit by the falling flakes of fire, lit by those ineffable figures of God's messengers drawn in hues of dawn against the dark background,—all this, in the first poem, is harmony or intensifying contrast of hue. Nor is the *Purgatorio* inferior in total effect with its more earthly and human, yet penitential, lights and

shadows. And the *Paradiso* is one blaze of light, with hardly enough shadow to define the figures and objects.

The human figure and its surroundings—these are the factors of literature. God must always be represented as supernatural nature or superhuman man. Sometimes, as in Wordsworth, the natural phenomena crowd man out of the canvas—mountains are the heroes, cataracts the heroines of the work; sometimes, as in most social comedy, nature is an almost invisible frame to hold together the crowd of human actors; sometimes, as in the very central art of Shakespeare, the earthy platform and its aërial distances are a floor and background which change and answer to the passions of the predominant soul of man; sometimes, as in Greek literature, this background is itself alive, and, taking a hundred human shapes, thrusts itself into the action.

To carry the subject a little farther, what are the probable effects on a national literature of thirty degrees of latitude? I mean, how will the various climates of our country, ranging from a half-arctic desolation to tropic bloom and splendour, work themselves out in our literary production? Most of the great literatures of the world have arisen in countries of circumscribed area and undiversified climate. However great may have been their voyagings of imagination, however vast the piratical spoils they may have brought back, the stamp of one home is impressed upon each. Thus, Hindu literature sprang from the great jungle at the foot

of the Himalayas. The depths of those forests, the height of those hills, were impressed upon it. Greek poetry was the child of the carved hills of Attica, of the sunny Ionian isles. No matter what excursions it made into the savage or the unknown, it never lost its clear outlines and serene air. The Scandinavian and Celtic literatures were born under the great forests, under the great mists, under the dark mountains of the North; and mystical glamour, gigantic formlessness, emotional thrill pervade them.

In America, the world is all before us where to choose. Shall we be clear and sunny, passionate and trivial, with the South? Shall we be dark and cold, powerful and profound, with the North? Or something between the two, with our middle belt of States? We have tried to be everything. Each locality has reproduced itself in literature, but with a lack of power and authority which results from there being no central type of fatherland and home.

THE LANDSCAPE PAINTER

IF pure happiness can fall to man it must surely be the lot of the Landscape Painter. He realizes Spenser's ideal, and enjoys delight with liberty. He is the real Aladdin, with the Lamp in his colour-box. This makes him master of the world. From it he can evoke forests and streams, palaces with rich domains, cottages where tranquillity abides. Only perhaps his genie does not always rise to his bidding with huge silver salvers laden with dishes or smoking with rich viands. But perish such low, material gratifications! Even if house rent is lacking he is so free of nature that he ought to be able to lodge in a tree, like the French poet, "third branch to the right."

The greatest of men have been tramps,—Homer, Socrates, Dante, Cervantes, the founders of religious orders, not to speak of more sacred names still. Some of these their fellow-beings have imprisoned or hanged—in order, I suppose, to give them some visible means of support. The Landscape Painter's business is to tramp, to explore nature, to be blown about by breezes on the heights, to burrow into the valleys, to eat his noonday bite by curling brooks, to bivouac if need be on bedded leaves, to be of kin to beasts and

birds and butterflies, to say to the ass, like St. Francis, "My Brother"; and when he has won the wise and healthy secrets of these things to bring them back to man in his crowded city dens as restoratives and inspirations.

What a life is his! Perhaps, like the lower order of tramps, winter may drive him into city quarters, but when spring breathes its first enchantment over the land he is out again where real existence is possible. He goes before the Gypsies and takes the winds of March with his beauty, if he has any. He hunts out the likeliest and loveliest localities, and is the real advance guard of the great army of summer boarders which follows where he leads. He is always Dr. Syntax in search of the picturesque. Perhaps nearly every attractive summer resort in this country has been first discovered and exploited by artists. The quaint and natural in human life appeal to him as much as landscape splendours, and he is the real leader of revolt against the artificial and sybaritic existence of the rich. It is the artist who discovers those delicious villages where life is lived as in a world remote or a forgotten century; or those individual inns which stand out in the memory like red letters in a missal. He is usually so simple in his tastes that he melts into this life as water does in water. The man of letters counterfeits all these tastes and traits, and because words are more portable and fly about the world easier than pictures he gets the credit for these returns to Nature,—but the artist is the man.

However, business is business. The Landscape

Painter is not out primarily for his health, or to gratify his instincts for the quaint, the charming, or the unexpected. He is bent on the conquest of the outer world. It is for him to overrun Nature as Alexander or Napoleon did the empires of man, and to put the stamp on his mind on the scenes he re-creates. Sometimes he makes a march to Moscow, but oftener he conquers and gives almost as much as he receives. For while he cannot compete with Nature in details, while he cannot begin with his pigments to rival the infinite delicacies or splendours of form and colour in the actual world, he can group and arrange these things better, or at least more significantly, than Nature. Nature, like Cromwell, is careless of the warts; but the artist can eliminate, thrust back, bring forward, soften or make vivid any part of the scenes he paints, and can transform the most commonplace of these into something which resembles the portals of Fairyland. Sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, are also in his line, and he can throw over Nature whatever he possesses himself of gaiety or melancholy,—he can add to it a tragic grandeur, and cast upon it the reflection of human fate.

To struggle with the problems of light and shade, of projection and distance; to deal with the sky as a great drop-curtain which rises and falls on the scenes of the world; to realize the clouds which build up their architecture of domes and towers throwing shadows upon each other or upon the earth beneath as they sweep over it; to handle

some front of foliage where half the leaves are like little mirrors reflecting the light of the sun and the other half are intricately confused in their own forms by the shadow of their neighbours; to paint the forest depths where rays of light are like visitations of angels and gild what they touch with floating gold; to reproduce that visionary light which at sunrise or sunset bridges the sky in an instant, and falling at one's feet turns the most ordinary objects to appurtenances of the Age of Gold; to re-create the mystery of twilight when dusk gathers in the trees and night creeps close to earth's bosom, while above, as day departs, the moon's bowl fills, the moon's bowl glows, and with it all the starry chalices; to reveal the glamour of the moon's torches as they move below, entangled in boughs and bushes or marching in broad procession along avenues embanked in shade; to give permanency to spring's half-nude graces, or summer's rich pomp, or autumn's wistful but glorious fading, or winter's sculpturesque outlines,—these are the labours and the delights of the Landscape Painter.

And when he returns to his city studio,—room so unlike all others, a chamber by night, a working place by day, strewn with implements of his craft, and with cooking conveniences in a corner—when he returns here what sheaves he brings with him, what rich spoils of conquest! That his pictures are unsalable is of little import. A man cannot have everything. He cannot get heaven and have rosewood furniture and velvet carpets at the same

time. He may not even have accumulated a wife and children, but he has espoused the day and begotten the stars.

Literature has been strangely neglectful of the Landscape Painter. It has an affection for huffing heroes and people of action, captains and men-at-arms. When it turns to the arts at all for characters it takes up with its own kind. And it must be admitted that literary men are better fun than their gentler brothers of the brush,—that their wits are brighter, their lives more interesting, that they deal more in love affairs, have more wives, and so become generally dear and delightful. Even literature incarnate in George Sand, who devastated all the other arts and sciences by her conquests, disdained having an affair with a Landscape Painter.

I can recall no great literary creation of this profession. Poets, novelists, actors, figure and flourish in fiction. Thackeray even gives us that great artist of sauces, M. Alcide de Mirobolant. But the painter is forgotten. The dramatists of course have no use for him. I think the only occasion on which he appears in person in Shakespeare is the brief satirical glimpse of the portrait painter in *Timon of Athens*. Molière, who painted and satirized all other kinds of men, left the artist out—though he must have known the Court painters of Louis XIV. Goethe, too, although he struggled hard to become an artist himself, did not devote any creative effort to bodying forth one of the craft. He drew poets, actors, even landscape

gardeners, but the man of the brush he ignored. The epic and narrative poets also ignore him. Antiquity simply does not know that he exists. Dante devotes two lines to Giotto and Cimabue. Milton, Dryden, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Hugo,—what have any of them done for the painter? Tennyson has his Lord of Burleigh, with the slighting—"He was but a landscape painter." Browning alone gives us some adequate sketches of artists, of which the one depicting the tortured soul of Andrea del Sarto is the greatest.

The novelists are a little better. Rousseau's St. Prioux was an artist. That tame specimen of the genus homo, Waverley, sketched; as did Colonel Mannering. The hero of *St. Ronan's Well* has a false glamour thrown over him by the imputation that he is an illustrious artist. Charles Reade's Triplet, being capable of all, might probably have painted landscapes, but there is no record that he did. There is no artist, I think, in Jane Austen's books. Charlotte Brontë makes Jane Eyre a landscapist, and a wonderful one if the description of the sketches she shows Rochester is exact. Mrs. Humphry Ward starts one of her heroes as a landscape painter, but she soon involves him in that web of fine folk and important affairs which she delights to weave and which has no possible human interest. Thackeray, half artist himself, did little to bring the painter into the realm of literature, though Clive Newcome does make a valiant attempt at art; and Dickens did less, though Alfred Jingle could paint. Truly,

printer's ink has not been wasted on the artist. The best creation of the kind I can think of in literature is the Scotch landscapist in William Black's *Shandon Bells*. He is worth more than any figure in *Trilby*, though the latter is one of the most important pieces of literature which is all about artists. Its instant acceptance showed that the world was hungry for knowledge of the habits and manners of these little-known animals. Murger's *Vie de Bohème*, however, is the central picture of artist life.

History and biography of course come to the rescue of the artists, though even here they get much less than their just proportion of attention. Vasari's *Lives* are comparatively full and fairly attractive, but we get little about the jolly, rollicking Dutch artists, and only dry scraps in regard to the French and Spanish men. There are no art biographies, I believe, that can compare in affectionate labour and rich detail with a score of literary memoirs.

Something has been made up to the artists by the great critics. Fromentin, Ruskin, Meier-Graefe, and others have given to the works of the great painters a profound analysis and splendid praise. Ruskin is rather under a cloud with the artists at present, though they ought to sacrifice a hecatomb to him every year. He opened the eyes of the great mass of English readers, taught them that the earth was something more than a place to plant potatoes in, and that the chamber of the air served other uses than that of respiration.

And he made the art which reported these other purposes of nature respectable and popular. His criticism erred in a hundred particulars. He was half wrong in his central principle that great art is the praise of God,—it is just as often the praise of the Devil, or at least an uncriticizing exhibition of him. He was totally wrong in his insistence on actual truth in painting,—in demanding that things be painted as they are rather than as they seem. He was largely wrong in both his apotheosis of Turner and his depreciation of Whistler. But when all is said and done, there is a great balance of right thinking and teaching to his credit.

Literature and painting are the most closely allied of the arts. The domain of literature is immeasurably the wider, that of painting the more definitely realized. The trouble with painting is this: it is not and cannot be known except to a few. Black and white or coloured reproductions do something to spread a knowledge of it, but these do not give the real vision of the artist; whereas a book repeats exactly to the reader what the writer created. It is perhaps this comparative secrecy and seclusion of the artist's work that accounts for his little prominence either in the real world or the literary report of it.

THE NOMAD IN LITERATURE

THE primal instinct of every healthy boy is to be a highwayman, a pirate, a hunter,—anything which will take him away along the road that stretches before his door, over the waves that beat before his home. As he grows up, this instinct is crushed or stifled in him, and he becomes a tethered thing, a city dweller or a serf of the soil. In a few, the longing for the distant, the unknown, persists, and these develop into sailors, adventurers, explorers, tramps. Perhaps it is the nobler part to stay in one spot, to build up a home, to sink roots into the land, to become a citizen in all senses of that word. But to seek change and adventure and danger is certainly not ignoble: they who do it are the imaginative and poetical souls. For the things we see all the time we do not see at all. Revelation comes with the first look. It is true that familiarity breeds contempt. Things show most greatly by glimpses. Out of the haze of the unfamiliar leap appearances of beauty and power and strangeness that thrill the soul. The wanderer alone can be experienced and educated. His mind becomes a storehouse of inestimable treasures, a picture-gallery of impressions, a library of epics and dramas and lyrics which are all his own.

What a splendid historic and literary ancestry has the common tramp, who skulks along the highway and bivouacs in the coppice beside his fire of dry twigs and his tin-can cooking utensil! There is Ulysses, whose vicissitudes and adventures go to form the typical song of the great open way. He, it is true, was not born to the trade of wandering. He was prudent, cautious, a getter of wealth, an accumulator of honours—the Benjamin Franklin of antiquity. But the anger of the heavens drives him forth, and he drifts over the face of the known world. What change, what variety, what experience! To be the companion of Circe's herds, to recline beside Calypso in her island grot, to be cast up naked on the shores of King Alcinoüs' kingdom, and to sit at banquet and tell of his wars and wanderings while the most glorious girl in Greek literature watches him from a shadowed doorway and wishes like Desdemona that heaven had made her such a man! And then the long delayed homecoming, the slaughter of the Suitors, and Penelope's welcome. Here Homer leaves him; but the wiser Dante (and Tennyson in splendid paraphrase) looks deeper into the heart of the much enduring, much experienced man, and doubting whether he who had known danger in a thousand forms, to whom nearly every new sun had brought a new difficulty or a new joy, who had felt the embraces of Calypso and the maidenly regard of Nausicaa's eyes,—doubting whether such a one could rest in tranquil content with a wife grown old and an insipidly pious son, sets him to call his companions

about him, hoist the sail on his galley, and steer out into the sunset sea.

Then there is the Wandering Jew, who certainly ought to be elected patron saint of the tramping profession. He too, like Ulysses, was pitchforked into the business—driven forth under curse or doom. It would seem that the divine powers held homekeeping to be the normal state of man, and travelling a punishment. It is the tragic note, too, of Ahasuerus' career which has been exploited by every writer who has handled the theme. But surely he must have got a great deal of enjoyment out of his never-ending experiences. For one thing, he has had time to exhaust the possibilities of life. For it is the deepest thing in the true nomad's nature that he is avid of novel adventure. He is no sooner plunged into one experience than a better one seems to rise before him. There is a fairer valley on the other side of the hill, a fresh enchantment a little farther down the road. In his nineteen hundred years of touring (if he is still afoot and faring on), the Wandering Jew can easily have seen all that may be seen and done all that may be done on this earth. There is another feature of his career in which he is peculiarly typical, and that is his loneliness. Your true nomad always, at least where the thing is possible, goes alone. He needs detachment; he needs to be eternally the stranger, really to know the novelty of life that rises around him. If he travels with companions, in companies, he carries his home life with him; he is protected against the new and the unknown.

But it was in the Middle Ages, the time of Chivalry, that the nomadic cult was the most widespread. The books that composed Don Quixote's library—Amadis of Gaul, Palmerin of England, Tirante, the White Knight, and all their companions, books which were the popular reading of Europe—testify to this, as do the great romantic poems of Tasso and Ariosto and the epics of Charlemagne and Arthur. It was part of the education of a young knight to mount his steed and with his trusty sword and lance leave his home and wander far and wide, seeking adventures. And it was not only an unmapped but largely a roadless world he had to traverse. Through forest, over plain and mountain, he had to find his way—a moving court of justice fighting wrongs, redressing grievances, encountering inimical giants or rival knights; glad indeed if the legitimate spells he bore with him were sufficient to overcome the might of evil enchanters and magicians. And all the while his only correspondence with home and the lady of his fealty was the trains of prisoners he sent to bow before her feet. If his quest were the Holy Grail, he became a still nobler and higher figure. The Holy Grail! That it is, in fact, which all the nomads of the world are in search of. It may mask under a score of names—the Passage to India, the North Pole, Eldorado,—but ever there is the idea of something worthy the devotion of a man's life, something whose winning shall be a crown to him forever.

We may pass by those professional nomads, the

gypsies, whose migrations thread through the ages, because they travel in companies and groups, and are therefore outside the pale of the true nomadic tribe. They have doubtless done the world good by letting a little mystery and a sense for the strange and remote into dull and settled communities. And they have also done good by proving to the peoples of the roof-tree that fresh air is not exactly deadly.

This last is the great merit of Rousseau. That he upset the thrones of Europe is a little matter in comparison with his revival of the lost art of pedestrianism, his teaching mankind that nature furnishes better employment for nose and eyes than the perfumed and decorated apartments of the *grand siècle*. He also taught his fellows the cheapness of the most delicious pleasures—the march along the tree-shadowed highway or through the flower-adorned wood, the halt by the spring or rivulet to bathe his feet and eat his morsel of bread, the talk with peasants or the picnic with damsels similarly astray, the bivouac under the stars. It is asserted, falsely enough, that nature came into literature through Rousseau. No age has been without its devotees of the open, and all that Rousseau gives, and more, is in Homer and Dante and Shakespeare. But he did for a time turn men's thoughts almost exclusively natureward. Chateaubriand and Goethe and Wordsworth and Byron are his pupils. Childe Harold would hardly have left his ancestral home if it had not been for the Swiss peasant.

The greatest of modern knights-errant are the explorers and discoverers. The North Pole, Africa, Asia, South America, the Pacific Islands, all have furnished their quota of redoubtable spirits lured forth to seek danger and difficulty, the novel and the unknown. It is true that these have usually had companions; but there is a loneliness of leadership, and Stanley and Burton in Africa, Nansen and Melville and Peary in the Arctic, are true to the most heroic nomad type. The mass of this literature of exploration is great, and it would almost seem that to wander and adventure is the natural and primal instinct in man,—that all settling down, building of homes and cities, the raising of families, the gathering together of material things, are repugnant to the best of the spirit that is in him.

This feeling is still more forced upon us when we consider the vast imaginative literature which may be classed as the wandering *genre*. Nearly all the great epics of the world are stories of travel and adventure. The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Shah Nameh*, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Æneid*, *Jerusalem Delivered*, *Orlando*, *Paradise Lost*, and others too numerous to be named, are dominated by the nomad star. The dramas of the world are more static; they demand a fixed framework and a unity of scene which are inimical to the peregrinating spirit. Yet even in the drama there are plenty of outlets for the nomad type. It is rather curious that Æschylus brings into contrast and contact the most permanently fixed of all tragic sufferers,

Prometheus, and the madly-driven world-circling Io. Oedipus is a wanderer, both when he commits his crime and when he expiates it. Shakespeare is never happier than when he can free his people from the bonds of home and society, and set them to wandering in the fields and woods,—as witness the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *As You Like It*. As for novels and romances, they are of adventure and wandering all compact. From the earliest one—*The Golden Ass*—to the latest best-seller, it is scarcely too much to say that nine-tenths of them turn that way. Run over the names of the great novels of the world—*Don Quixote*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *The Three Guardsmen*, *Tom Jones*, one-half of Scott, the best of Dickens,—all are treatments of the wandering theme. If novels represent life, it would seem that we are a race of nomads. The wanderer at least is the hero of literature, even if he is ineffectual and more or less of an outcast in real existence.

Of course the centralizing and concentrating influences of life are really the most powerful. They are necessities of our state; the expansive and diverging forces are in comparison luxuries. In particular, woman is the type of home and society. Wherever she appears she is a centre around which a framework and a barrier are speedily erected.

In conclusion it may be said that wide wanderings are not absolutely necessary for the display of nomadic instinct. We may make discoveries at home. Each of us may be a Columbus to the continent of Ourselves.

THE ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND

NATURE and Humanity are the terms of literature, but there is a third factor which has grown to great proportions. This is the architectural background; that part of nature which man has infused with his own spirit, and uses as a nest, a refuge, and a fortress. Unlike the snail and tortoise, he does not carry his house upon his back; but in some measure, like them, he secretes it from his own nature. It is his second skin—the vestiture he places between himself and the world. The colder or more varied the climate, the closer does he hug to this outer weaving, the more intimate his relations are to it. In a region where people live in the public square, where a man can wrap himself in a cloak and sleep under the foliage and stars, houses have not much importance in life or in its reflected mirror of literature. Existence in Greece and Italy was existence in the open air; and so it was with literature. The walls of Troy, the tents and ships of the Greeks, the palaces of Ulysses or Alcinoüs, are briefly indicated in comparison with the wealth of detail which a northern writer would have expended upon them.

The forms of architecture show this difference in interest. Architecture for the Greeks was for

274 The Architectural Background

the gods and rulers. It was an affair of state, a comparatively outward thing, upon which, indeed, all taste and cost might be expended, but which was not the intimate life-expression of Northern races. The Greeks stuck four posts in the ground, put a roof over them, and were content. The lines of the Parthenon are duplicated in the first barn or Quaker meeting-house one comes to. Accepting the laws of equilibrium so simply, they were free to expend their whole energies on the casing of such a shell; could carve and paint and decorate. Gothic architecture, on the contrary, is a protest against the laws of gravitation. It gives wings to stone, turns timber to cloud. It is a prayer, an agony, a dream. All this is not to say that, architecturally, it is better than the Greek style. Indeed, as architecture is a material art, the physical perfection of the Greek may consort with its end and aim better than the spiritual aspiration of the Gothic. But the last is more individual, more steeped and dyed in human feeling. And it has reacted upon literature to an enormously greater extent. Buildings and houses in the North have become the persons of the drama. Heine imagined a scene where all the cathedrals of Europe should be gathered together on a vast plain and a quarrel should arise among them, and they should rush on each other in awful combat. And one can shut one's eyes and call up an endless procession of the houses of men rebuilt by words in modern literature.

The line would begin away back with Asgard,

the home of the gods, whose building calls the curse upon them; and with Walhalla, where the Valkyrie maidens bring the slain warriors to revive and quaff their mead in endless feast. Then there is Brunhyld's home, and the Hall of Etzel where occurs the most prodigious slaughter in fiction. And there is Conor's palace at Emania, whither Déirdre comes to die. But these are mythological and heroic habitations; and it is not until we come to Chaucer that we get down to the earth, and have houses with chimneys and fireplaces, abodes where it snows of meat and drink. Spenser is of the South, or of some No Man's Land. His house is out-of-doors; he has a passion for gardens and "salvage wilds"; it is only now and then that he dashes in a vignette of some hut or hermitage or hall, "seated in hearing of a hundred streams," where real people would want to dwell.

In the printed drama, the architectural interest is of course skeletonized. Such scenic directions as "a room in a palace" or "before the altar in a Church" are bare bones from which one can extract little nutriment. Yet by hints and indirections, by the issue of the actions, the Castle of Macbeth looms sombre and gigantic, the most tremendous projection of its kind. And the Palace at Elsinore, seen at first with glimmering lights through the darkness, denoted by the salvo of cannon which hails the revelry of the King, fills the imagination. The Tower of London broods over and dominates a succession of Shakespeare's historical dramas. The late Richard Mansfield felt this so keenly that

276 The Architectural Background

in his production of *Richard III*. he opened with a silent scene which merely showed the huge mass of the fortress where so much of the interest of the play centres. In Belmont, Shakespeare is Italian, but he gives the place a touch of home enchantment which probably no Italian poet could have equalled. And he contrives also to make the cave in *Cymbeline*, Miranda's home in *The Tempest*, and Duke Theseus's palace, instinct with the same charm.

The pseudo classical eighteenth century was a homeless one, at least in literature. Nobody seemed to be impressed with the poetry of houses; sermons in stone did not sink into the mind of that light, frivolous, social age. The influence of buildings is a romantic power, and only when the Romantic revival hove in sight did it come into its own. The *Mysteries of Udolpho* is really an epoch-making work in this respect. Here again was the subtle domination or alliance of architecture and action. Cowper in *The Task*, sang the home, its snugness and comfort; and Burns rescued the humble cottage for poetry. From the despised, rejected Defoe, we get what is almost the most notable instance of the significance of home-building. The fascination of *Robinson Crusoe*, I think, arises from the fact that it shows the whole genesis and growth of man's necessary shelter. We see the human animal putting this together, bit by bit, furnishing it with needed implements, foraying forth from it in search of food. There is nothing in the work but the absolutely elemental facts of existence.

Sir Walter Scott gathered all the Romantic threads into his single hand, and the architectural background thrusts forward prodigiously in his pages. From Roslyn Castle, Fair Melrose, the Hall of the Last Minstrel, to Baron Bradwardine's house, and Ravenswood and Kenilworth and Woodstock, he has a long succession of houses whose façades or interiors echo and complete the human action.

But it was reserved for later Romance writers to carry the architectural theme to its limit. Victor Hugo deliberately made Notre Dame the central personage, the protagonist of his novel. Hawthorne, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, essayed the same theme on a lesser scale. Balzac and Dickens are almost more the historians of houses than of humanity. In the Alkahest of the former, the house and its furniture are as much alive as the people. And Dickens seems to have tried to body forth all the picturesqueness and gloom of London, all the quaintness and charm of English villages.

There attaches to houses and buildings where men abide, first the property feeling, the feeling which each individual has that such an abode is his seat and throne, "a poor thing" perhaps, but his own. Then there is the sense of seclusion, of privacy, of a circumscribed world. Catullus, always curiously modern and romantic, has an exquisite touch, where after wandering over many seas, among many people, he returns to his peninsula abode at Sirmio and stretches

278 The Architectural Background

his limbs upon his own couch and feels the luxury of home.

This little universe of the house has its central sun in the fireplace. The hearth has always been a superstition with the Aryan race. We are all fire-worshippers. A good part of the Vedas is devoted to the ritual of the hearth-fire. The home too is, or was until recently, the peculiar province of woman. It might be discourteous to call her the moon which revolves around the sacred hearth, and perhaps in summer when the fires are out, or in steam-heated apartments, she must herself be all the warmth and light. Men, with their glowing cigars or puffing pipes, are the stars and clouds of this little world. The idea of food, too, attaches to the house. We can, of course, eat out-of-doors; but eating as a fine art suggests a house with the accompaniments and conveniences that pertain thereto. What a frame is to a picture the walls and windows of a room are to such a festal rite. Perhaps such restriction concentrates and intensifies nearly all human actions, which is one reason why modern writers show such a preference for interiors.

It is hardly an over-fanciful idea that the walls of buildings may absorb, and give out again in influence, the actions, dramas, sorrows, or felicities which may have occurred within them. Ghosts certainly belong almost exclusively to houses, or have but a tethered pasturage outside. In Bulwer's extraordinary story of *The House and the Brain* we get the conception of a whole building plastic and pliant as it were to the evil will of a

long-dead occupant. Secret passages, disused and mouldering chambers, dungeons, treasure closets, ruins, have all proved valuable assets in literature. In the latter part of the eighteenth century there was a great run on ruins, but they have rather gone out of fashion despite this picturesqueness and imaginative associations. Of course the other side of architecture—its beauty, grandeur, charm, and convenience—have all been exploited in poetry and fiction. The stately homes of England, in Mrs. Hemans's phrase, live in a thousand word-pictures. We have them all on our imaginary visiting-list: Darcy's fine mansion, which turned Elizabeth Bennet to marry him; Esmond's Castlewood, Peacock's Headlong Hall or Crotchet Castle, Shirley's house, Wuthering Heights, and many more whose precincts have been our haunts of pleasure or of wonder.

The Inn is the house raised to the *nth* power. It offers the unexpected and the piquant,—comfort without care, company without responsibility, variety without dulness. Meals simply happen; they come at the clapping of our hands. And adventures occur without the trouble of seeking them. As a consequence literature is crowded with inns: its pages reek with the savory smoke of their chimneys, glow with the rich light of their fires, echo with the clatter of their dishes, the voices and laughter of their guests. All inns in literature have some merit, even the scurvy Spanish inn of Don Quixote. But French and English inns are best. Those of Chicot and Dom

280 The Architectural Background

Modiste, of D'Artagnan and his friends, of Scott and Dickens, are delightful enough to draw back translated spirits from heaven. The greatest of all in the whole range of fiction is the Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap, whether Shakespeare or Goldsmith invites us over its threshold. There is a passage in one of Hazlitt's essays which seems to me to express the inn feeling at its perfection. After a long summer-day's walk, he has arrived at a country inn and ensconced himself in the cosy coffee-room looking out on an old garden. The supper, though simple, is good, and he has a volume of Congreve in his pocket, upon whose glittering prose he regales himself by way of desert. Never, he says, did he feel the charm of literature and of life to a greater degree.

It would be invidious to say nothing of the lodgings and chambers where so many good fellows, poets, artists, soldiers, men of leisure, the gay rattling advance-guard of each generation, have made their first stand in the fight for place and fortune. The roll-call of such lodgers of literature would be longer than the catalogue of the Ships; but Tom Jones, Thaddeus of Warsaw, Nigel Olifaunt, Warrington, Pendennis, Mr. Pickwick (young at least in spirit), Marius and Our Boys, rise to mind. And the prisons or sponging-houses where so many of these heroes temporarily bring up ought not to be neglected. Nor should the cloister cells of colleges, where they have their larvæ state before they spread their splendid butterfly wings, go without mention.

We are not altogether lacking in antiquity in America, but as a rule we are so furious in rebuilding that we do not let our houses acquire the mellow crust of age, the traditions, memories, ghosts, which would make them serviceable to literature. And we march over so vast an estate that our architecture is more puzzling than picturesque. One difficulty with it is the varying climate with which we are endowed; a building which is suitable for our winter is ridiculous in our summer, and the reverse. But we are gradually emerging from architectural chaos, and doubtless literature will follow on and decorate our homes "with the wreathed trellis of a working brain."

THE CITY-BUILDER

A GREAT city ought to be something more than a lodging-place and restaurant for a million people. It ought to have a character of its own; it ought to be an expression of the best thought and life of those who dwell therein; its ways and walls ought to be a perpetual joy to them; it ought to be an inspiration as well as a possession, a pride and a shield against the rest of the world.

Except the sowing and reaping of crops, there is nothing in the material way that men do more important than building. It provides work and wages for many classes of men—architects, artisans, craftsmen, mechanics, labourers. It furnishes them with hearths about which their lives centre, and gives them innumerable picture-galleries outside to gaze upon. And when the life and glory have departed from a place, the ruins of its buildings draw the feet of travellers to wander among them. They are like broken caskets where rich scents have been confined and still exhale the perfume of the past. Nature itself has no memories, but a ruined temple or tower ever makes a brave fight for its founders or its families against oblivion.

The fascination of great cities,—what a wonderful thing it is! All roads led to Rome. For a thousand years or more its columns and its roofs, its theatres and its baths, its gardens and its thronged ways, glittered in the imaginations of all Europe, lured Gaul and Briton and Spaniard and African to the central hearth of the race. The “lights of London” flare today all over England and draw to them a steady stream of human moths. The nation is emptying into the town. The urban spell—the desire to be where life is fullest and brightest, the instinct for the society of crowds and the security of walls, the hope to breathe the intoxicating atmosphere where power and genius and art and beauty flourish, to be among them and have one’s name blown abroad over the land,—this enchantment works as powerfully today as it has always done. “In respect of itself,” says Touchstone of country life, “’tis a good life; but in respect that it is not at Court, it is naught.” It takes a great mind or a heavy disposition to fight against the contagion of the crowd—to refuse to be caught in the whirlpool current of city life. Tamerlane the conquerer sent for Hafiz the poet and said to him: “Bokhara and Samarkand are the great cities of my realm: yet you, you sir, say in a song that you would give them both for the black mole on your girl’s cheek.” “Yes,” answered Hafiz, “and it is such liberality as that which has reduced me to the state of destitution you see.” After all, the song, or the story of the song, has outlived the cities.

This indrawing of a nation's blood to its heart is not the best thing for it, of course; but it seems to be inevitable. Augustus is said to have suggested to Virgil that he write his *Georgics* in order to attract the Romans back to their old rural life; and many statesmen have wrestled with the same problem since. Baron Munchausen's story of the black magnetic rock looming up in the ocean, which, when an unwary ship approached it, caused all the nails to fly out of the planking and left the vessel floating in fragments on the waves, may be taken as a symbol of what happens to many, very many, of those who yield to the city attraction.

But if human beings must live in cities, they ought to have the best kind of cities. Health, fitness, spaciousness; comfort and beauty in architecture; and something more than a mere hint of nature in trees and gardens, are necessary. People left to themselves huddle together,—as witness the many-storied houses of Rome, of old Paris, of Edinburgh, and the narrow streets and courts of scores of other cities. There is undoubtedly a charm and a picturesqueness in the gloom and haphazardness of such constructions. The accidental is often happier than the designed. Baron Haussmann swept away a good part of the romance of Paris when he remodelled that city. But democracy demands the best; it demands the healthfulness, the comfort, the room and privacy, which formerly the nobles only could obtain.

It demands these things, but it does not get them. It is doubtful whether the multitudinous

rows of tiny houses, as much alike as pins in a paper, or the gloomy blocks of apartment buildings whose funereal appearance suggests that they are prepared for the urns of the departed, are much better than the happy-go-lucky living-places of the past. Better arrangements for health, they may have; but their dreary monotony strikes terror into the beholder, and must reduce the vitality of those who live in them to the lowest ebb. One could only retain one's senses in them by being continually intoxicated.

Worse, perhaps, than our domestic architecture in America are our business avenues, with their medley of all styles—sham Greek, sham Gothic, sham Arabic, and the native dry-goods box set upon end and punched with holes. Our great public buildings have largely been kept respectable by being imitations, copies of similar structures abroad. At one time in our career we did build with charm and a certain originality. The old colonial erections, with their simple lines and hand-wrought details, stand out wherever they are found, in pleasing contrast with the furious and eccentric things around them. That America can ever produce an entirely new style in architecture, seems improbable; but some of our greatest buildings have an American note in them which differentiates them from anything done before. For instance, there is something in the great flights of steps to the Capitol at Washington which recalls that oldest architecture of America, the pyramidal buildings of Yucatan and Central

America. And the great feature of the Capitol at Albany, the transverse stairways of the façade, is simply a transmogrification and glorification of the old Dutch stoop, the dominant thing in colonial architecture both in Albany and New York.

We have undoubtedly developed a new architectural note in the Babel-like towers of our great cities. Size is an element of power, and vertical height is the most impressive kind of size. These buildings are really impressive; under certain conditions of lighting or of weather, they are remarkably picturesque. But their details are generally bad,—the details of ordinary buildings forced out of all proportion. And against them is their unsubstantiability, apparent or real. It is a daring and inartistic thing to build towers and cliffs of cobwebs and lace-work.

Modern inventions in transportation and communication have entirely changed the conditions of the laying out of a great city. With the telephone and the automobile, there is no reason why newspapers should not be published in sylvan dells and stock exchanges have their habitat on wooded heights. But probably convenience will always dictate that a city should have a central nucleus, a limited area devoted entirely to the business needs of the community. But the domestic life of the people can be scattered over many square miles.

Of all the purposes of public good to which great private wealth can be devoted, there is probably none open to fewer objections than building. A

man who puts up a fine structure of any kind not only gratifies himself, but improves his neighbour's property and gives pleasure to multitudes who may live or come in view of it. It seems a little remarkable, therefore, that among the possessors of vast fortunes in America no one has come forward to build a city of his own, from the egg up. One of them might do what the great conquerors of the past did, or Constantine, or Peter the Great.

Imagine a modern City-Builder acquiring, in a favourable and dominating position in this country, a tract of land a hundred miles square. It might stretch from the mountains to the sea, and have every variety and diversification of surface—valleys, forests, lakes. What a pleasure it would be to assemble together the directing minds of such an enterprise—engineers, architects, landscape gardeners, masters of sociological and sanitary science—and with them plan the great design. Ordinary mortals haunt the cities of the past to draw from their memories sustenance for the heart and mind. In such a palace, we say, occurred this event of historic splendour and importance. From such a house went forth a romance which has warmed the world. At this tavern gathered together the wits and men of fame whose words are on our lips. But such a City-Builder as we imagine could almost dictate the course of events,—could develop glorious and beautiful happenings, as we do novel or perfect plants.

In the beginning it would be necessary to provide means of transportation and communication;

to lay out roads and sewers and subways. The road alone has hardly begun to be treated with decent attention by man. What possibilities of joy are in it—not merely in the roadbed itself, which may be supposed perfect in our dream city, but in its directions, its prospects, its enclosing trees and hedges and walls. Fruit-trees and flowers could be planted along it, free to all travellers. Bowers and seats and pavilions should be erected at points of best prospect or in places of secluded charm.

For our dream city should be a woodland city, a park city. There should be a great many more trees and flower-beds than human beings. Means of transportation the most direct and most unobtrusive should radiate from the more solidly built central mart to every part of the domain. But the people should mainly live in delightful villages, on mountainside or in valley, by lake or sea. And though the architecture of the buildings and houses should not be restricted to one style or mould, there should be a harmony of conception, a toning together of effects, which practically do not exist anywhere today in the modern world.

Such an ideal scheme might easily be realized by great wealth in the hands of a man of bold thought and unselfish devotion. But even if it is too vast to be practical, there is enough for such a man or men to do in transforming our present cities into really decent and delightful places of abode. Two-thirds, perhaps, of the architecture of our

towns needs to be swept away, for simplicity and beauty to take its place. Streets should be more beautifully aligned, and the woods and grass made to march over many squalid areas.

CABBAGES AND ROSES

THE trend of modern thought has been to assert that cabbages are as admirable as roses—nay, that they are superior; for we can eat cabbages, whereas, like Du Maurier's poor musician, we do not habitually "lil on roses." In almost all contemporary criticism this utilitarian idea crops up. We ought to admire, we are told, the creations of the modern fiction-monger, because he gives us people who are of use in the world—farmers, fishermen, doctors, engineers; because these are, as a rule, models of unselfish conduct, paragons who do their whole duty in this life. How superior they are, how much better fitted for our guidance and imitation, than the self-centred, imperious saviours or destroyers of mankind, the lords of ideal fiction,—Prometheus, Achilles, Hamlet, Lear, and their like!

The old literature saw everywhere hierarchies of spiritual and intellectual beings, of animate and inanimate objects. Some incarnations of humanity were greater, wiser, more splendid than others; some natural objects were more beautiful and perfect than the rest. The idea of fitness and appropriateness pervaded art. The heroine,

Ophelia or Belvidera, had to go mad in white satin: now we put her in a patched frock and sabots.

It is certain that we are, all of us, striving for wealth, power, distinction, or rule. We prefer mansions to hovels, athletes to cripples, beautiful women to homely ones. The shop-girl dreams of being a duchess; the salesman imagines himself a hero. Why should not this universal, this saving instinct of mankind for what it deems the best find expression in literature? It has always done so before, and the finest figures of fiction are the embodiments of this human worship of greatness and beauty.

The extremes of life are the regions of supreme art. On the one side are the princes and potentates and powers and dominations of the world. It is hardly necessary to say that these need not be born in the purple,—but they must have heads upon which crowns of some kind naturally fall. On the other side are the creatures of the gulf and gloom, dark apparitions of poverty, madness, rebellion, and despair. Great art bridges the distance between these opposite worlds; it strides easily from Hyperion's palace to Job's dunghill; from Illyria's court to the tavern where Burns's *Jolly Beggars* are congregated; it discovers in one work Lear on his throne dealing out kingdoms, and the same personage crouching on the ground defenceless against the outrage of the elements. In the one case the artist deals with beauty and grandeur,—and poetry and romance come easily

to him. In the other case he works with shadow and horror, and power is ready made to his hands. In both cases the subject is given to him and he has only to prove himself equal to it.

But there is a vast extent of life where the subject is not given to the artist, where he has, by mere handling, to make significant and interesting the ordinary and common happenings of mankind. This is the region of social comedy and the modern novel. Molière's work would be mainly of this kind were it not that the gods descend from their heights in the *Misanthrope*, and the gulf surges up from below in *Don Juan*, *Tartuffe*, and the *Miser*. Reacted upon by humour, this middle region of life can become a spectacle of power; painted merely for itself, it is likely to be monotonous, insipid, flat.

Vanessa said that Dean Swift could write beautifully about a broomstick. Our modern novelists do not often write as well as Swift, but their task is essentially to make something out of nothing—to dress up the broomsticks of ordinary life so that they shall seem animated and strong. It is creditable to their skill that they do very frequently produce such an illusion, but somehow their work has the trick of fading away before that of the creators who take the good the gods provide in the shape of great characters and actions.

For there is a difference in the quality of actions. These take colour and grandeur from their settings and surroundings. Generally, things done, spectacles presented on the stage of the world, are

more impressive in the eye of mankind than those enacted in suburbs or purlieus. A young girl who works to support an aged mother or a crippled brother may have a heart as pure, a devotion as high, as Jeanne d'Arc; but the depth of spiritual monitions, the pomp of state and war, the terror of a fiery doom, lift the French maiden out of all comparison with humbler fates.

Modern writers are almost all humanitarians. It is an honour to their hearts that they are so—that they have taken up the cause of the down-trodden, the forgotten, the average human being. They have said to themselves that love and joy and pain and death are universal,—that there is no reason why a poor young clerk should not love with the passion of a Romeo, why a deserted girl of the streets should not feel as deeply as Marguerite, why any mother mourning over her dead should not be as great a figure as Niobe or Rizpah. And there is perhaps no reason, except that of fitness, if the author feels competent to supply three-fourths of the capital stock in such characters. If he feels that he can afford to throw away subject and rely entirely on handling, there is no reason why he should not do so.

For while sensation, feeling, emotion are universal, intellect is not universal. I am willing to concede that average or inferior human beings feel as deeply as beings of a higher grade; but they cannot express their feelings. They are inarticulate; and art, which is expression, rules out the inarticulate. Romeo is Romeo because of the

magnificence with which he utters the litany of love. A Marguerite who could not sing of the King in Thule, or plead with her lover about religion, or utter the wonderful sentences of the dungeon scene, would be a failure. A Lear or a Timon without their kingly splendour of thought and speech would be inconceivable. But the modern novelist may say that he can dower his average or inferior character with thought and language of his own. Even if he can, there is the question of fitness. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the extremes of action and thought and speech which go to make up a great character in fiction would be ridiculous if brought into the *milieu* of the middle class.

The whole matter comes round to a question of subject. Are there any subjects, actions, themes, better than others? Are there any kind of personages more suited to exploitation in literature than the common ruck of mankind? Are there any surroundings—grandeurs or splendours of scenery, sunsets, storms, moonlight magnificences, architectural backgrounds, palaces, gardens, and the like—which help and heighten a work of art? In short, is there any real difference between cabbages and roses?

In one of the first and perhaps one of the most important of Matthew Arnold's critical pieces, the preface to his *Early Poems*, he deals with this question. The essay is a revolt against the mannered detailed modern work in poetry—all foreground—and an appeal for the large masses

and outlines of the ancients. Seize a great action, he tells the poet; approximate language will follow. It will—if the author is filled with the power of his theme, capable of being thrilled by its significance. Great actions are usually the results of great causes; they take place among those who have that stamp of intellectual superiority which, far more than emotional agitation, is the mark of the highest type of literary creation. Emotion must exist in them, but it must find vent in deeds and words which denote mental power. The modern novelist, in painting the average man and woman, is necessarily debarred from great actions. His sense of fitness keeps him from putting into the mouths of his characters that concentrated intellectual speech which was the privilege of the poets of the past. He tries to make up for these deficiencies by the analysis of character and of moods of mind. But just so far as he pushes this, his figures lose validity and vitality. They are seen to be puppets moved by himself—or, at the best, dissections of dead souls.

Life seen near at hand is mostly detail. The trivial, the unimportant, the commonplace, do not fall away and leave the masses and the meanings of the scene apparent. Real contemporary life, therefore, would seem to be suited mainly to comedy and social satire. Not until we get away from the foothills do the great mountains loom up. It is not that the heroic age is past—that there are no great souls, mighty intellects, wonderful actions, magnificent settings for deed and

character today. All these things doubtless crowd the world. But just as the singular and superb figures and actions which gleam to us out of the past were in their own time obscured by rivals or inferiors, so with us our best is hidden and hustled away in the multitude of happenings. In this sense it may be said that the commonplace is the uncommon which has not yet been tested by time and space.

Practically, the great artists of literature who have brooded deepest over life have affected the distant or the past for their creations. They were not foolish enough to doubt that human life is always essentially the same; they did not really believe in any Age of Gold, or Day of the Gods. But they knew that to evolve tragedy, romance, poetry, they must get away from the garish light of their own hour. All the great epic poems are projections against the mists of antiquity. The great dramas are founded on traditions and legends of historical or immemorial past. Shakespeare has not one play of contemporary life—or if the Italian Comedies are contemporary, they get from remoteness what they lack in age. Again and again modern poets and romance writers have entered the grave of the past to resurrect it. Goethe and Schiller, the German Romanticists, Scott, Byron, Rossetti, Hawthorne, Poe—one would have to call the roll of modern literature to name all who have, in the main, avoided their own day and their own native life. To be sure, there are exceptions. Perhaps Hugo's *Les Misérables* is the

most remarkable effort to find romance and tragedy at home. Is it successful? And are the Realists—the men and women of the last great revolt in literature, the artists who have refused to paint except direct from the model—are they successful? In comedy, in social satire, there can of course be no doubt: that is their province, and Jane Austen and a hundred successors must live in letters. But in tragedy, in romance, have the Realists, the greatest of them,—Balzac, Turgenieff, Zola, Tolstoi,—done anything that will last beside the work of the older schools? Time alone can tell. Yet these authors have one of the sources of power that I have indicated above: they dive into the depths and draw forth its creatures of gloom and horror. They deal little with average fairly-contented or happy humanity. If anything saves them for posterity, it will be their pessimism.

THE INTOXICATION OF WORDS

SOME years ago I was sitting one evening on my porch, while a little distance away two colored coal-heavers were resting from their labours. They had the power to talk of Heaven and Hell; and one of them discoursed in this wise: "What's a darkey want to go to Heaven for? All he have to do there is sit up in the cold, cold night, enumerating the stars an' counting the constellations of the Golden Host; an' then when the morning breaks he have to go down to the bottom of the garden an' draw up millions an' millions of buckets of water for the Children of Israel."

I quote this speech because I think it affords a good example of the spell which mere words exercise over mankind. The most ignorant of men feel their power. Anyone who has listened to a darkey preacher of the old style can recall similar instances of unthinkable combinations of language which yet often had a touch of inspiration in them. Dryden confessed that a rhyme often helped him to a line; and the negro speakers, laying violent hands upon fine words, sometimes found ideas tumbling in with them. More usually, however, they were like the South Sea Islanders who parted

a chest of dress clothes among them, so that one wore a pair of breeches around his neck, another a coat belted around him like a skirt, and a third a high hat perched upon his hairy horns.

Words are not only for use—they are for adornment. They are not only the counters and coins with which we transact our business—they are the jewels in which we array ourselves for dignity or pleasure. Properly used, they have the gleam and sparkle and colour of gems, and they are as indestructible. Genius showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold.

Words are like deep-laden freighters plying between the shores of the abstract and the concrete worlds. They bring in their holds the spices, the webs of woven air, the fabrics of dream, from the one land, and take in return the corn and cattle and iron of the other. There are, properly, only two great systems of philosophy—the system which makes all existence thought, as in Plato's *Theory of Ideas*, the Maya or Illusion of the Hindus, the Realism of the Schoolmen; and the system which finds nothing in nature but matter and the sensational experience of it. Words are the common carriers of both of these conceptions of life, as far, at least, as they are transferred from mind to mind. Whether the Idea and the Thing are one, and if so which it is that is the one, are questions not likely to be decided. But words are incarnations of the thought and symbols of the thing. In the hands of men entirely great, they are so much alive as to suggest the idea that the

300 The Intoxication of Words

universe itself and all that is therein may be merely the written language of the Master Being of all.

It is when words are new to us, when they sound to our ears like shells reverberant of varied oceans, when they glitter to our eyes with pearly opalescence, that their power is greatest. They are the spells which vitalize the magnificent make-believe of childhood. "That is a castle!" the boy cries; and to the eyes of himself and his playfellows the old hair-cloth sofa swells out into barbican and battlements and keep. The cupboard is a robber's cave, and jackets and pinafores become the panoply of knights or the garb of pirates. India is in one corner of the room and Hudson Bay in another. Prevailing poets, their undoubting minds believe the magic wonders that they speak. The child's mind opens and expands to language more rapidly than to actual experience. It is, as a rule, dull to natural scenery; it does not readily grasp human character; it disdains the ordinary business of life. But out of words it weaves an enchanted world in which it moves in absolute disinterestedness. There is no shock of disillusion, because one experience in this world is just as good as another. There is as much excitement in losing a golden treasure as in finding it. Being a hunted robber is as good fun as being a noble knight. Life is a delightful dream, and words are the substance out of which its hills and valleys and palaces and towns and people and pageants are created.

Undoubtedly the artist's mood is the child's

mood. Literature deals with much else besides art. It moralizes, it teaches, it satirizes, it exhorts. To the writer whose predominant tendency is for any of these functions, language is mainly a vehicle of thought, a medium of communication with mankind. It is not necessarily more sensuous or self-existent than mathematical formulæ. But the pure artist merely dreams and creates; and to him words are the most real of all real things, because he sees his visions rise out of them into existence, as clouds rise out of the sea. Not for him is it to doubt the truth of his word-embodied beings; not for him to make any difference between the children of his brain—to separate them into sheep and goats, to love and laud his good characters and hate his bad. He regards them all alike, so long as they can alike be clad in the vivid vesture of words. If he has any preference, it is for his dark or parti-coloured projections of sin and passion, because those are capable of more power and picturesqueness than his virtuous flock. On the other hand, the writer who is half artist and half moralist is continually in doubt as to the reality of his own creations. He is apt to speak of them contemptuously as puppets; he rips his dolls open to show us the sawdust inside. He pursues his evil personages with implacable fury. His purpose is mainly moral; and as he uses words only to convey his ideas, so he uses characters only to enforce them. All this may amount to very great work, but it is something quite different, and usually is inferior to the real

artist's dream-like disinterested reproduction of the world as fresh as on creation's day.

As words are most potent to children who are just learning them, so they are most pregnant with magic in the youth of a race when it is just forming its language. The discovery that things can be named, that we can pack the riches of the world into our minds, that we can in a way overrun and possess the earth by turning it into sign and sound, always intoxicates. And in the early stages of a nation's growth, this discovery is very widely made. Then a poet addresses an audience of poets. Then brief and pregnant verse is preferred to dull and diluted prose. Then the images of life do not have to be spelled out and explained and illustrated and made visible by material objects, but hints and glimpses flash them at once into the minds of auditors themselves inflamed with creating fury.

The one sensuous quality which inheres in words is sound. All their other powers to enlighten, to move, to intoxicate, depend on their arbitrary meanings, which we have to learn, on the way they are put together by those who handle them, and on the associations which they acquire. And though there is a large class of words, in every language, which give an echo to the sense, and sound like what they indicate, and though there is a still larger number of words of innately noble and mighty sound, yet in the main the delightfulness of words uttered in conjunction depends upon the skill of him who uses them. Alliteration, the

repetition or contrast of vowel sounds, rhyme, assonance, the movement of words in quantity, accent, rhythm, measure, or the fixed employment of so many syllables or accents in a line,—these are the sensuous resources of language, to which, in great part, it owes its intoxicating and memorable triumphs. They are really resources of verse; for though prose can use some of them, it is seldom bettered by so doing.

Alliteration is the most common means used to give distinction to moulded words, and its use ranges from the popular proverb up to the elaborate schemes of Milton or Swinburne. It is like the marking time, or keeping step, of a group of soldiers, which differentiates their movement from the vague shuffle of the crowd. It is apt to become an offence when too much insisted on; and the greatest masters keep it half hidden, like a delicate chain thridding through and binding together their jewelled words. Milton usually has two or three sets of alliteration going at one time. Vowels have their alliteration as well as consonants, and it is upon their reduplication or sharp dissonances that much of the music of verse arises. Some poets, with all their care, can only bring forth light tinkling melodies; while with others the vowels sound out rich and full like the notes of mighty bells or lordly organ-pipes. The principle of repetition of sound comes out most completely in rhyme and assonance, where, being undisguised, it is used to bind lines together and separate them from the context. Beyond the couplet and the

quatrain, rhyme weakens sound by diluting it. I think such excess of rhyme weakens meaning, too, by a sort of subtle sympathy; so that the regular sonnet and the Spenserian stanza, while elegant and ærial, are less forcible and objective than simpler forms of verse. The principle of repetition is also involved in rhythm, and measure, with their fixed use of quantity or accent; but here it is the repetition, not of units, but of groups. A measured motion seems to be at the root of all such devices of language, and their material type is the dance. Still larger repetitions of sound, as in the stanzas of a long poem, or the threefold division of a Pindaric ode three times repeated, may have some sensuous effect on readers at large; but their appreciation is mainly for experts.

I believe that, scientifically treated, the vibrations of sound can be made to transform themselves into colour and figure. But there is only a remote possibility that words can so affect the nerves of men. All colouresque, sculpturesque, or architectural effects produced by language must be the result of the association of ideas. We early learn the meanings of words, and as we go through life each one of them gathers riches to itself until it draws after it a trainload of pictures and impressions. There is no reason in nature why one word should mean one thing more than another—why the word “splendour,” for example, should not mean darkness, or *vice versa*. But once fixed in our minds that splendour means a certain quality of light and colour, it absorbs into itself all our

experiences of magnificent natural or human glories—sunsets, serried mountain peaks, glowing autumn woods, great cities, man's strength, woman's grace, noble actions, and lofty dreams; so that when the word is pronounced, all these concepts are shuttled before our eyes in one composite vision. When, therefore, the orator or poet or prose writer begins his art-work which is to intoxicate or command us, he has disposed upon his palette thousands of words which are vivid with our blood, trembling with our life. Cæsar refuses his revolting legionaries the title of *Milites* (soldiers) and calls them *Quirites* (citizens), and so quells the mutiny with a word. The Irish multitude is cold to the idea of the Trinity, until St. Patrick plucks the familiar shamrock from the sod and exemplifies the trinal unity.

The wielder of language has not only single words freighted with associate ideas at his command, but he has analogies, metaphors, comparisons, similes, parables, tales, to draw upon. The whole experience of the race is his—limited only by his hearer's or reader's intelligence. No other artist has a twentieth part of the weapons with which he is armed for the conquest of mankind.

PICTURES AND WORDS

WE remember seeing not long ago in a newspaper a group of eight small pictures which admirably briefed or summarized one of the novels of Mr. Hall Caine. Underneath them was the legend "Why read novels?" It did seem superfluous in the face of such shorthand. But in books and magazines the illustrations seem to be getting the upper hand of what is illustrated. Newspapers are becoming a mass of photographs from life with merely a trickle of commenting text. People seem to go through business and games, to perform heroic deeds, to get married or hanged, not for any interest in these things themselves, but simply as an excuse for posing before a camera. And then there are the Moving Pictures!

We have had many a special wonder in the way of inventions to overcome us in recent years, the telegraph, the telephone, wireless, the bicycle, the automobile—but none of these is more miraculous in essence or has spread over the world so instantaneously as the Moving Pictures. Events have been taught to record themselves, so that Time seems to merge into Eternity. Yesterday is abolished!

The Theatre, too, as it has existed from the beginning of the world, seems in a fair way to be abolished. Like a myriad-armed octopus the Moving Picture business seems to be grasping the players and the playhouses in its grip. To the players it offers a simultaneous exhibition of themselves at a hundred, perhaps a thousand places. To the public it offers a cheaper entertainment than has ever been known before. It is curious to hear people in remote villages discussing the merits of Mr. Bosworth or Mr. Bunny, as the inhabitants of cities used to talk of Booth or Irving. We may dislike to see the drama "flicker down to brainless pantomime"; we may object to have the theatre poet and the novelist turned into makers of dumb-show scenarios. But the new art is not on probation; it is overwhelmingly triumphant.

And as a means of education, as a substitute for travel, even as a subsidiary form of entertainment, it has proved its value. But we do not believe that the impressions it makes are deep or permanent. We do not believe its excitements will ever rival those of the great arts. "I go to the Moving Pictures because I don't have to think," said an acquaintance to us. The "tired business man" has dictated the course of the drama for a good while, and apparently he now has something that suits him better. But an art which eliminates thinking and, to a great extent, sympathetic emotion is not likely to go far. When photography itself was first introduced it was generally

thought that the death-warrant of the artist had been signed. But photography has been found a brainless and soulless substitute for the thinking mind, the creative hand.

Picture writing is probably the oldest of the graphic arts. To represent things and ideas by symbols certainly antedates the representation of them by words. And always among the ignorant or undeveloped the pictorial art assumes immense importance. Children get their first education from picture books. When reading was almost a hieratic art, as among the ancient Hindus, Persians, and Egyptians, or among Europeans a few hundred years ago, pictures were almost the only means of impressing religious or historical notions upon the masses. Perhaps it would be truer to say that only since the invention of printing has the universal reign of the word come in. It is only natural then that the people should catch at the visible representation of things and actions when it is offered them.

The partial eclipse of words, however, is a serious threat to intelligence. Speech is man's highest prerogative; language is his all-conquering weapon. Nations trained, either by the spoken drama or the printed book, in the use of noble, significant, and delicate language, are certainly likely to be more civilized and powerful than if they should be content to get ideas flashed upon their brains by the means of pictures. Imagine the effect upon an audience of the presentation of *The School for Scandal* in pictures; all the wit and

malicious phrase and delineation of human nature left out, and nothing given but the dumb show of the scenes! Or *As You Like It* or *Macbeth* produced with all their poetry and infinite suggestion of language omitted. Then imagine this method applied to all plays past, present, or to come, and surely it would breed a race of unparalleled stupidity. Spectacle the Moving Pictures can give, though certainly not with the effectiveness of figures and masses in the round, fixed, or moving in real space and distance. The coarser and more violent kind of action they can give; but violence seems almost a necessity as it is in pantomime. The exhibition of finer shades of feeling and thought, of matters interior and spiritual, must be abandoned. The Moving Pictures produce something like the same effect as witnessing the performance of a play in an unknown language. We remember seeing Salvini in *King Lear*, and, though of course familiar with the play, the lack of instant recognition of the spoken word made us feel that the great actor was a Jew peddler trying to sell Goneril a bill of goods. Of course our whole criticism is predicated on the idea that the Moving Picture shows are pushing the real Theatres aside, are taking over to themselves the entertainment and instruction of the great masses. There could be no possible objection to them if they were kept in proper subordination.

Charles Reade, who always held a brief for the Theatre, in one of his stories rebukes a young poet for imagining that certain of his lines have merit

in themselves apart from the intonation and look of the actress who utters them. The lines, "O'er my bowed head, though waves of sorrow roll, I still retain the empire of my soul," have merit and we can hardly imagine any elocution or gesture which would improve them. On the other hand, critics have debated whether really great dramas can ever be acted up to the idea which we form in reading them. Charles Lamb denied that *King Lear* could be adequately performed and deprecated the bringing of it upon the stage as a desecration. How much less satisfactory, then, must be the performance of any play with language, which is its very soul, omitted.

One cause of the immense success of the Moving Pictures is their realism. The real pump upon the stage has always been a joy to mankind; how much more then must it thrill when it can have real locomotives going at real speed, real collisions, real battles, murders, and all the incidents of moving life. Plato condemned poetry because the actual world being the mere shadow of the primal Ideas, the poet was working at second hand and giving an imitation of an imitation. But Plato was probably wrong. The poet, working from the materials furnished him by nature, seems to re-assemble them into something that approaches the God-sprung Ideas. As has often been pointed out, Achilles is truer and more potent than Alexander, Hamlet than Charles V., Shakespeare's *Richard III.* than the actual tyrant of England. Passing through the alembic of a poet's mind

these figures have acquired a validity and universality that they did not have in life. Nay, we will go farther and say that natural scenes rarely come up to the concentrated images of them presented us by the poets. Has anybody but Shakespeare ever seen

"Jocund day
Stand tiptoe on the misty mountain top" . . . ?

Has anyone ever got from an actual oak wood such a rush of impressions, such a sense of multitudinous power as Keats furnishes in the following lines?

'As when upon a tranced summer night
Those green-robed senators of ancient woods,
Tall oaks, branch charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from some gradual solitary gust,
Which comes upon the silence and dies off
As if the ebbing air had but one wave.'

Art betters nature by importing into it the joys and fears and passions of mankind; by joining together remote things in unforeseen similitude; by giving us at once the object itself and its profound meaning. And art works this magic more potently by the use of words than by any other method at its disposal.

So far as we have got in the history of the world words are the most lasting, if not the only lasting things. Language, frailer, more immaterial than

cobwebs, lives when everything else perishes. In the hands of men entirely great, as Bulwer's *Richelieu* observes, it conquers the conquering sword. It covers and outreaches all the other arts. It expresses ideas, which music cannot do. It records actions in time, which sculpture does not, and in space where stationary painting, at least, fails. It can give us impressions of colour and call up sensations of taste.

The Moving Pictures, having got rid of this great intermediary of language, give us reality raw from the shambles of life. Of course the scenarios require a certain amount of preparatory planning and the acting a modicum of art. In a way the business is a culmination of the realistic movements in literature and art of modern times, and it serves the inaugurators of these movements right to have the guiding reins taken out of their hands. The egotism of human beings always tends to push idealistic and significant art aside for what is seemingly literal representation, and the Moving Pictures cater to this egotism. We are afraid the business will have to run its course and will result in an indefinite postponement of a really great literary, dramatic, and pictorial rebirth in our modern world.

THE TRADITIONS AND THE NEW AGE

THE New Age is always here. It is always impatient of its predecessors, confident that it is the champion of humanity and the culminating epoch of the world. It always tries to break with the Past. As if it could! As if the filaments that run through it had not their root in the Past,—as if its flesh were not made and moulded of things gone. The very *Döppelgänger* of the Past, it turns and draws its sword upon its own image, threatens it with its own force, challenges it in the tones of tradition.

Are the arts progressive? Science doubtless is, though we are much in the dark as to the knowledge of the ancients. In mechanics, at least, they could do things we cannot approach. But the extension of scientific knowledge seems unquestionable, though even yet we are Newton's children, picking up pebbles on the sea-shore.

Art, however, is the revelation of the human spirit, and as far back as we can trace it has revealed pretty much the same thing. There are no such steps rising one above the other, no such culminating growth, in art as in science. Doubtless humanity has never possessed all its faculties

314 Traditions and the New Age

complete at one time. Doubtless one age has been stronger in one form of art-expression than another. There have been strange lapses of forgetfulness and sudden revivals; but on the whole there has been maintained a pretty even level.

The work of antiquity in two of the arts, music and painting, has perished. Its music has been doubted, but the literatures of both the Aryan and Semitic races are saturated with references to music—bear witness to their intense delight and preoccupation with it. It is hardly conceivable that races so intelligent should have been continually talking of an art that did not exist. Painting of course they had. Some of their wonderful vase painting remains, and from the excellence of this almost mechanical work we may argue the greatness of the real artists. Homer must have seen some marvellous work in relief or mosaic before he wrote the description of Achilles' shield. In the Hindu poet Bhavabhûti's drama, *The Latter Acts of Rama*, the whole of a long act is given up to the description of a set of wall paintings, which, if they were ever realized, must have rivalled anything in modern art.

But as so little of this past work exists, we are driven in these two arts to near comparisons to see if the New Age has won out and driven tradition from its stronghold. The New Age in painting claims landscape for its own. Take, it says, to the Past, your figure compositions, your dramas of the doings of men and gods; take your portraits, your realizations of the soul of man;—I admit that I do

not equal you here, but resign the outer world to me. Now upon some minds Ruysdael and Hobbe-
ma and Claude Lorraine, and even Salvator Rosa
or Richard Wilson, make as strong impressions as
the modern masters. Their truths are not quite
the recent truths, but they are true enough for
illusion, and their pictures bear the stamp of
superior minds. And the landscape backgrounds
of Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, and Velasquez
are as magnificent as anything in modern art,
which indeed they anticipate in a remarkable
degree. Constable, too, is not quite a modern,
though he is the father of modern landscape.

But the last great French School claims that it
has brought the sun upon the stage, that it has
painted light. It has theorized, has brought the
science of chromatics to its aid, and in practice has
actually realized the vibration of light. There are
pictures of Degas and Monet that are absolute
incarnations of shimmering, pulsating light. It is
not to disparage the often splendid work of this
school, or the pioneer courage which its members
displayed, if one suggests that much which they
have done has been anticipated. In Turner's
skies we get much the same broken vibratory light
as in Manet or Monet. And that white sky-mud
which FitzGerald said that Constable's sun threw
up on its revolutions produces a like effect. There
are sketches of Constable which might be signed
by Monet or Seurat. Even the "*pointillisme*" of
the latter harks back to Canaletto. For ages there
have been schools both of drawing and engraving

based on the use of the dot. Many of the Dutchmen, too, have painted artificial light as vividly and as truthfully as Degas. And there is a wonderful light which, whether truthful or not, has fascinated the world, in Leonardo's *Our Lady of the Rocks* and Rembrandt's *Night Watch*. The fact is that as a rule we do not want to paint light,—we want to paint solid bodies of different hues, densities, and distances, illumined with light. Against light-coloured backgrounds, clouds, white walls or water, the vibrating light of the moderns is a success. Against dark backgrounds or scenes much involved in shadow, it is a failure. And shadow is the soul of painting, as it is of literature.

The use of flat painting is another sign of the moderns. But this is no new thing, and was in fact learned by them from Velasquez, who sometimes paints so thinly that the canvas shows through. Scorn of the subject is another note of recent art. But it is pretty hard to escape from the subject. The subject of Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* is what caused the scandal and the persecution of that great painter. Whistler laughed at the English artist's preoccupation with story, but his own *Lady with the Yellow Buskin* is a subject picture. In its fugitive motion it embodies the idea of woman flying and inviting pursuit. If Whistler had painted a nude nymph in just that attitude, given a suspicion of foliage to the background, and labelled it *Daphne Flying from Apollo*, he would have had a subject picture which everyone would have understood. As it is, the meaning is crypti-

cally concealed by the modern dress. Gainsborough's *Morning Walk*, though only two portraits, is a subject picture. And Constable's *Cornfield* might be labelled *Peace* or *Fecundity*.

One would not wish to say a word against the great modern school of French artists, of whom Burne-Jones said that they were noble gentlemen working courageously for their ideals without regard for success or even for the necessities of life. But they are all fragmentary. The great painters of the past,—Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt,—are warriors completely equipped, armed *cap-à-pie*. Each of the moderns would seem to have seized a part of this equipment—a helmet, a breast-plate, a lance, or a sword; and though each one may have burnished or sharpened up his piece of hardware beyond anything its original owner knew, yet it makes but a poor show against the full armament of the masters.

Music is a language that has only two words—joy and grief. Its lively tones excite and interpret the one, its slow and solemn motions the other. But just what joy or what grief are associated with the notes we must determine for ourselves. Anything can be read into their broad expressions. This indefiniteness, this resolution of all existence into the pulsations of the heart, its systole and diastole, is what gives music its universal appeal, and what keeps it from having an intellectual content.

Again, a musical phrase is like a syllogism,—it is a movement that has a beginning, a middle, and

318 Traditions and the New Age

an end, and that satisfies us with its completeness. But to give us two terms of the syllogism and withhold the third, or to wrench them violently apart, is certainly to deny any such satisfaction. Discords are necessary for variety and the shock of surprise; making a composition of them can hardly be musical.

But the New Age decided that music must be dramatic, that it must express and give the exact equivalent for the sharply defined thoughts, feelings, and actions of humanity. Wagner is the great dividing name in music. He thought that pure music had reached its climax, and that nothing remained for him to do but to invent a new method of using tones as a mnemonic exercise. And his invention—the *leit-motif*—has great merit. Of course no succession of notes or chords has any resemblance to a helmet or a sword or the Niblung gold; but after certain musical phrases had been associated a number of times with these things in the action of the drama, the mind of the hearer began dimly to appreciate the repetition, and to realize the symmetry of the musical architecture. It was a little like the game of "hunt the slipper"; but once we were trained to the quest, we could understand, in the Wagnerian work a sort of gigantic harmony, a titanic thorough bass. Of course, with every new work of this kind we have got to learn the harmony over again; and it is at least questionable if this repays us as do the legitimate forms of music.

There were six hundred thousand volumes in the

Alexandrian library. At a mere guess it may be doubted if more than a thousandth part of these remain. What did the others contain? What song did the Sirens sing? No one may know; but we may be sure that, as Tom Moore said of the Irish epics, those books were not written by fools or for foolish purposes. From what remains we must judge that the literature of the ancients subtended as wide an arc of experience as our own. Realism and romanticism were there, and allegory,—the most daring flights of imagination, the most literal reproduction of fact. The New Comedy of Athens, if we had it, would probably be a fair offset for our whole mass of modern novels. And all the forms of literature were then invented,—drama, epic, novel, tale, lyric, idyll. Mr. Burbank may create a new flower or vegetable, or we may get a new animal by crossing breeds; but the modern writer may despair of making a new form or kind of literature. Whitman aspired to this sort of originality. He took the forms of literature, which are really its living body, to be cerements; and he essayed to burst these and soar, a new thing. But the Greeks had their irregular dithyrambic verse. It is a legitimate enough species; though such is the craving of the human mind for recognizable form in poetry, for repetition, recurrence, symmetry, that such shapeless verse has never made any wide appeal. Blake, who anticipated Whitman in the use of it, as he did to a great extent in thought, has never been much read. Nor has the irregular lyrical blank verse of Milton and Matthew Arnold.

320 Traditions and the New Age

Probably the most popular thing Whitman ever wrote is the little lyric, *My Captain*, which comes nearer than anything else of his to recognized models of metre and rhyme.

The genius of a language when in its formative period can and does create new forms. Modern accented verse differs from the quantitative poetry of the ancients, and each modern race has developed special and favourite variations of its own,—as the assonance of the Spanish, the alliteration of Scandinavian and Celtic poetry, the Alexandrine in French, and the heroic line in English.

The real originality of every writer lies in the glow and movement and vibration of his spirit. If these are vivid and rapid they will certainly differentiate him from all others, though he make no effort for originality of thought or newness of form. The stronger they are, indeed, the more probability that he will accept the dower of the past,—will take what tradition gives him, in order to ease him in his work.

Let us deal kindly with tradition, and tradition will be good to us. Let us not try to push our grandsires from their thrones. Rather, if it is necessary to save them, let us bear them tenderly on,—as the pious Æneas carried old Anchises from the wreck of burning Troy.

MODERNITY IN LITERATURE AND THE NEXT MOVEMENT

THE last great world-encircling "cry" in literature is stilled. The tumult and the shoutings of the captains of "realism" have died away. Of course there never was any such thing as realism. The good books produced by that movement do not differ in essentials from the good books evolved by any other recipe or formula invented by men. But some formula seems always to be needed as a rallying cry for authors and artists. And readers are thrown into buzzing excitement, as bees are summoned to swarm by the beating of a brazen kettle.

The world-wide roar of the realistic movement has broken up into a hundred, a thousand, noises and motions. We are in the midst of whirlpools and eddies and waters that sway back and forth and seem to have no order or discipline or determined end. It is a day of individualism, naturalism, neo-romanticism, symbolism, revolutionary nihilism, sex celebration and sex enmity, social frivolity and nature seriousness,—all these doctrines and dogmas and a myriad more are cried up. The prophets of unrighteousness have their

innings and the defenders of law are dumb. The most rapidly disseminated philosophy of recent times, that of Nietzsche, is an invocation to chaos. "Is civilization a failure and is the Caucasian played out?"

In default of any better term, these whirlings and blind motions of literature and art in the present may be called modernity. Modishness is its note. It aspires to be "brand new," "up to date," "right off the bat." More decisively even than realism it tries to break with the past. It has an utter lack of reverence for the great work or established reputations of the past. It says to Homer and Dante and Shakespeare: "Go to! We are as good as you." Its attitude might be typified by the story of an old English dauber, an imitator of Titian, who, staring in ecstasy at one of his own canvases, exclaimed: "What would old Tit think of this?" The most curious feature of our passing madness is that we believe we have re-created a whole world of art and art-forms out of our own heads.

Yet the fact remains that nothing in our recent output is new. In spite of the contortions and struggles of our novelists and playwrights and poets to be strong, to be daring, to be extreme, there is nothing that they utter which will compare in these qualities with much of the literature of the past. Take the exploitation of sexual passion and vice by which our contemporaries try to shock us. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is milk and water beside the strong meat of *Measure for Measure* or *Pericles*.

Three Weeks has no standing at all as an aphrodisiac compared with Afra Behn or Casanova. The soiled heroes and heroines of Mr. Wells's later novels are mere doves compared with the people in Fielding and Smollett and the Restoration comedy. Or take the studies of extreme low life which have been vaunted as a novelty of late. The thing has been done far more vividly and explicitly by Defoe, not to go out of a single age or country. It is hard to beat *Moll Flanders* or *Colonel Jack*. As for revolutionary literature, literature which proposes to itself to upset old existing laws and conventions, what is the matter with Schiller's *Robbers*, or with a great part of Burns, Byron, and Shelley?

Turning to the initiation of new art methods, symbolism is of course as old as the hills. Europe was saturated with it in the Middle Ages, and it created in the *Divine Comedy*, the *Faerie Queene*, and the *Roman de la Rose* works more monumental certainly than anything of recent date. Even Novalis's *Blue Flower* of a century ago is less platitudinous than Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*. Our new romanticism, where it is suffered to bloom at all, is rather a frail offshoot of an older stock; and the return to nature was preached and practised better in a former age.

On the whole, modernity does not seem to be either greatly original or overwhelmingly powerful. Yet it has been of advantage to the world in breaking up the serried ranks of realism, scattering the varied talents and giving a loose to individ-

uality. It might be compared to the "dynamite ploughing" now coming into vogue, which brings up a new surface to our farms. But something more than mere disturbances of dirt is needed to produce crops. Sunlight, air, and rain are the permanent and universal factors in agriculture. Is it fanciful to suggest that there are spiritual analogues to these same factors in farming,—that ideal elements enter into life and art from above; that beauty, grace, grandeur, and sublimity are some of these elements; that they have been allowed little chance to work upon, to aerate and elevate modern literature; and finally that there is a hope, almost a promise, that this ideal contingent is about to swoop down upon our art and carry it to new heights?

The present writer has never been able to accept the theory that beauty is the be-all and the end-all of art. One of the earliest and best expositions of this theory is to be found in Schiller's *Æsthetic Letters*. Briefly stated, Schiller's idea is that art springs from man's profound dissatisfaction with ordinary life. Because of this dissatisfaction he reverts to the play instinct, the make-believe of childhood, and fashions for himself a world where everything is harmonious, where beauty reigns supreme. In the first place, to criticize this, it is remarkable how little the beautiful or the harmonious comes into the play instinct or make-believe of childhood. Children are little mirrors,—they satirically mock the doings of their elders; and things of fear and horror have a fascination for

them. You cannot please them better than to frighten them as a bear or wolf. Punch and Judy, with their hideousness and brutality, exercise a perennial charm over them which Greek statues and Shakespearian comedies would fail to rival. When they begin to read, the literature they affect is the odd, the quaint, the extravagant, and the bizarre,—as witness *Mother Goose*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and Grimm's *Fairy Tales*. No, the root of beauty is certainly not in the childish mind.

In the second place, no sooner has Schiller set forth his position that beauty is the first and final cause of art than he is compelled to divide it into two kinds,—a calm and graceful beauty, and a vivid and energetic one. A little later on he has to drag in the Sublime; and in his discussions with Goethe he comes to the conclusion that the characteristic and the significant are factors in art co-equal with beauty itself. He ends, therefore, with a complex with which he might as well have begun. All art appeals to the feelings, the emotions, and the imagination. We feel, are moved by, and imagine many other things beside beauty. The majority of men are more profoundly affected by things of fear and horror than they ever are by those of beauty.

Nevertheless, ideas of beauty, and the cognate ideas of grandeur and sublimity, are good for us to consider and to live with. Else there were no growth, no ascent in life,—only a dull plodding on in a level round or a downward slope to the abyss. But modern literature has done its best to banish

these ideas. It has fashioned idols for itself as ugly as the fetiches of South Sea islanders. It has made a law that one subject is as good as another, and that only execution counts. It has gone further, and turned its back on all that mankind had previously judged to be attractive and desirable, and has dived and delved into purlieus and places of no regard. It has pushed aside the palaces and gardens and brought forth the alleys and the tenements. Swamps, deserts, barren farmsteads, factory-ridden suburbs, are its delighted haunts. And the human creations with which it peoples these abodes are suited to their surroundings. Now execution, if it is the execution of a genius, can do a great deal, but it is just as well to have material to begin with. There are hierarchies and ranks and gradations of interest in both nature and humanity. A rich and varied life to deal with is half the battle in art. If a great writer cannot get anything better than Walden Pond to celebrate, he may yet make something of it; but there are more possibilities in Lake Como. But the trend of modern literature towards not only the second best, but towards the worst in life, is all but universal. A few poets and mystics have stood out for beauty, nobility, and charm, but the greater part of Europe and America has been submerged by the ugly, the abnormal, the unclean, and the merely dull. Dickens was the last absolutely great creative artist of England. But for beauty he substituted picturesqueness, for charm the unflagging vivacity of animal spirits.

His deficiency in the higher qualities makes him lag second in the race with Scott for the primacy of the English novel, though probably dowered with greater creative genius.

In the modern world there have been two great epochs when the Spirit of Beauty waved its wand before the eyes of man and made him see visions and wonders. The first of these was the Renaissance, beginning with Dante and Petrarch and culminating in Shakespeare, with its bead-roll of mighty painters, architects, and artists of all kinds. In this epoch what man woke to realize was his own beauty and splendour and magnificence. He peered deep enough into the glooms and shadows of his life, but he was chiefly interested in its glories. The second awakening began with Rousseau and was continued by Goethe, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and a great line of landscape painters. It revealed the outward world of nature, and for a while humanity was intoxicated with the glories of its temporal home.

Literature to-day has about exhausted the common and the chaotic. Pretty nearly all the dull and disagreeable places of the world have been discovered and exploited; pretty nearly all the diseases and disgraces and brutalities and banalities of human nature have been tabulated and typified. It is time that the Spirit of Beauty should again put forth her power and impel art to a new advance. Ideals of harmony and happiness should be reinstated in the human mind as possibilities, at least, of possession. Design, order,

distinction, should set their seals again on literary work. Will the Spirit of Democracy oppose the Spirit of Beauty? I do not think so. It was the mob of a democratic city which carried Cimabue's picture in triumph through the streets. It was the workers, craftsmen, masons, labourers, who gave the work of their hands and their means to the building of the cathedrals of Europe, and who felt repaid by the glory of the growing fanes. Democracy may have a passion for art; and even if this were not so, we are not all going to be democratized into pigs.

THE FIGHT FOR FREE RAW MATERIALS IN LITERATURE

THE world is always pleading with Genius to be peaceful and proper. "Don't write those strong, strange, horrid things you delight in," it says. "Do something pretty and pleasing, and I will take you on my lap and feed you with sugar plums." "But I must write masterpieces," answers the Genius. "If you do I will knock you on the head!" screams the World. "Knock and be hanged!" says the Genius. And so masterpieces come to be written, and so the Genius joins the

"Many proud ghosts of heroes who add to the train
of Aides,
Their bodies a booty to dogs or a prey to the ominous
vultures."

Generation after generation, year after year, the same storm of protest is evoked by any work which deals with the primal passions, the great crimes, the naked realities, or the evil-working potencies of life. But the strange thing is that what shocks one age is accepted with calm complacency by the next. Mrs. Grundy is only concerned with present violations of her code.

330 Fight for Free Raw Materials

Paris shuts its prudish ears to Molière's *School for Wives*, but in a few years it is read in the schools for students of literature. "If I had been God, and known that *The Robbers* would be written, I should not have created the world," said a German prince, of Schiller's play, which is now considered good for boys. The author of *Jane Eyre* was told that she was a woman who had forfeited the companionship of her sex; but *Jane Eyre* is today a book for women. Even so daring an innovator as Rossetti said of *Wuthering Heights* that its scene was laid in hell, but apparently people in that locality bore English names. The best critical opinion today calls the work a tragic masterpiece, the greatest book ever written by a woman. Not only time, but distance, seems to do away with the offence of force, the flavour of impropriety. American audiences listen calmly to plays of German or Italian authors, when they would ostracize a native writer for similar work.

Wherever power and beauty exist, there, it is safe to say, the makers of literature will always be gathered. Power is principally to be found in the extreme exhibitions of good and evil, but most in evil, for good is too characterless for delineation: light cannot be realized except by contrasts of darkness. Beauty has both a spiritual side and a physical side; we cannot ignore either without throwing things out of balance. Great artists usually work from the turbid to the clear, from the sensuous to the spiritual. The horrors, the tumultuous energies of life, the delights of the senses, the

charm of existence, impress them first; afterwards come tranquillity and service of the spirit.

In part, the objection to such themes springs from a radical misconception of the relations of imaginative literature—pure literature—to life. A great deal of what for lack of any other word we call "literature" is didactic. It is concerned with the training of character, the guidance of conduct. Through it, religion, law, order, and custom speak to man. Its business is instruction, restraint. It preaches the mortification of the flesh, the subjection of desires. Imaginative literature does not exist to make us good, but to make us intelligent,—in the vernacular, to "put us wise" as to the happenings of humanity, most of which would never come within the scope of our experience; it exists to delight and broaden and elevate our minds by reproducing and expressing life—all life. There is no reason why it should not be permeated and aerated by the principles of religion and law. Generally it is. But though morality may be its theme, it cannot be its object. Literature has just as much right to rebel against religions, laws, moralities, as to enforce them. "One good custom may corrupt a world." Like Hamlet and Laertes, good and evil are continually changing foils. God does not fear truth.

In one sense, then, we take imaginative literature too seriously when we would transfer to it the province of the pulpit or the law court. It doesn't deal with us in that way. In another sense, we do not take seriously enough its potent magic,

we do not realize the greatness of that cloud-life which rises from the ruins of real existence, which lives on immortally while the generations decay. The concern of didactic literature is with ethics, conduct; the concern of imaginative literature is with ontology, being. The greater includes the less. In this country there has been a good deal too much coddling of character and far too few free adventures of the intellect.

Literature which deals with the relations of the sexes, the temptations of the flesh, is the great stumbling-block to prudes of both sexes. They can tolerate the literary presentation of all the other actions, vices, crimes, temptations of humanity, but they cannot endure the visualizing of this passion. How do the master poets of the world answer to their protests? Love, legal or illicit, is the predominant theme of their works. Homer bases his *Iliad* on the infidelity of Helen. He defers to her beauty, says that her act was the act of the Goddess, and lets it go at that. Calypso in her grot, Circe on her island, are the first of the great temptresses of man. The greatest of the ancient tragedies, the *Agamemnon* and the *Œdipus*, are tales of adultery and incest. Virgil paints most vividly the *liaison* of Æneas and Dido. Tasso's garden of Armida, Spenser's garden of Acrasia, Milton's garden of Eden, are furnished with nude figures painted in the most glowing and alluring colours. These are perhaps three of the purest-minded of poets. It would almost seem that richness of hue and grace of line in the treatment of

the nude are tests of an author's high-mindedness. Tennyson is as sensuous as anyone in his *Merlin and Vivien*. Wagner has Kundry and her flower-girls. Shakespeare bares the very throbbing heart of sense in the love scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*. Marlowe, Fletcher, Ford, Dryden, even Pope, Burns, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Goethe, Hugo, Musset,—in fact, everyone who has written greatly—has written frankly and freely of that passion where flesh is transfigured into spirit and spirit transformed into flesh.

There is a vast difference in the way men and women regard the literary presentation of sex subjects. To women, love is a mystery, something to be kept holy and secret. Her curiosity about it may be as great as man's, but she wants the matter wrapped up in sentiment, in delicate innuendo, in reserves more dangerous, perhaps, than blunt dealing. Woman is probably responsible, more than man, for the thousands of novels, plays, poems, which treat the "theme of three"—wife, husband, and lover. Man is the fantast and philosopher. He can be more ethereal and imaginative in his desires and emotions than woman, but the ironic earth-spirit moves in him and makes him turn the matter into unholy merriment. His persuasion of the cheat of life makes him strike at the processes of life itself. His spirit, indignant at not finding perfection in the one relation which seems to promise it, takes revenge in ridicule. Hence arises a vast literature of raillery against women, an orgy of humour about the functions of

sex. Hence the bestialities of Aristophanes, Juvenal's frightful libels on women, Rabelais' overflowing animality, Shakespeare's invective and descents into the grossest realism, Goethe's sardonic irony, Burns's frank indecencies. Often this kind of writing is about the profoundest thing in literature. At times, at least, it makes both the lofty idealisms and the common-sense proprieties of the world seem like hollow shams. It is a sort of skeleton at the feast, a thing at once for mirth and shuddering. But literature cannot spare such revelations. A literature without such reminders of the rent the soul must pay for its tenure of the body would be a literature in the air; it would be a dish lacking in salt and savour.

Plato excluded the mischievous poets from his Republic; the Spartans, in fact, extruded them from their community. It is possible that some State may again try this experiment, but it is quite certain that its condition under such a reign of Fact will be worse than it was before. It will be a dull and gloomy tyranny. Not only will much of the joy and hope which goes to ease the burden of life be banished, but morals themselves will deteriorate. The play of imagination is the safety valve of the passions. If you debar men from indulging in mimic passions, they will plunge all the more readily into real ones.

Readers of sense know very well how to discriminate. They are furnished with feelers, antennæ, by which they can separate what is practical from the divine make-believe of literature. They are

not going to commit murder because they can thrill with the spectacle of Macbeth's guilt. They are not going to filch purses because they can enjoy the humour of Falstaff's exploit at Gadshill. They are not going to bolt with the first pleasing person of the other sex, because Cleopatra or Camille is dear to them. They accept imaginative literature as a vicarious experience, which enlarges their minds, deepens their emotions, makes them contemporaries of all times, citizens of all places. They are willing to allow to the artist the utmost liberty of his materials if he can only make something of them.

There are two statues in existence one of which represents the Muse urging the horse Pegasus on, while the other shows her holding him back. This is no bad allegory of the imaginative and didactic forces of literature in relation to life. The main business of the former is certainly incitement. Its province is to make men realize that they are alive and that they have wings. Unfortunately with us in America, the restraining hand is most in evidence. The direction of our literature has been largely undertaken by pedants and pedagogues who itch to use on mankind generally the ferules they are forbidden to apply to boys.

THE MAGAZINE GIRL

THIS is the literary era of the wax doll with the brick-dust complexion. She stares at us from every news-stand. No self-respecting magazine ventures to issue forth without her picture on its cover. Head or bust or full length; walking, golfing, motoring; rampant, couchant, or regardant,—she is the heraldic emblem under which the cohorts of periodicals charge to victory.

Eighty or a hundred years ago there was a somewhat similar putting-forth of feminine charms in the *Books of Beauty*, *Annuals*, and *Keepsakes* of that period. Elegance was the note then, as prettiness is now. The duchesses were elegant in their boudoirs; the heroines of the poets were elegant against their backgrounds of storm or sunshine; the wives of brigands were elegant in their mountain caves; even the bare-legged peasant women tending their flocks, or reaping a ten-acre field with a twelve-inch sickle, were prevailingly elegant.

We confess that we have a weakness both for the older female (one would not dare to call her woman) of the *Annuals*, and the newer Girl of the Magazines. Of course both are dolls, and of the latter it may be said that the paint on her face

has sunken in and circulates in her veins. If she were stabbed with one of her own hat-pins she would hardly exude a drop of real blood. But she is pretty; and her vogue testifies to the undying ideality of the race, its craving for beauty and romance—"the desire of the moth for the star," and so forth.

That is it! For thirty years we have been wandering in the desert of realism. Our novelists have swathed us in sand, and burned us with pitiless light. We have starved and been athirst; we have panted for the shadow of a great rock or the softening veil of trees or mist. Now and then we have stumbled into an oasis, and we have fortunately been fed with manna from abroad. Oh, the horror of the retrospect!—the gaunt sordid spectacle of life on New England or Pennsylvania farms or on the prairies of the West; the descent into the Inferno of New York slums; the ever-recurring visions of middle-class life in factory and shop and mansion. It has been an orgy of the ordinary, a delirium of dulness, an apotheosis of the commonplace.

So we do well to welcome the Magazine Girl, with all the literary output which she represents. She does not work; she is the creature of the leisure and opportunity and affluence which most of us covet. And Solomon was certainly not arrayed like her. Give her time and she will develop into a genuine heroine. Her eyes will deepen with other emotions than desire for an automobile ride or a dinner at Sherry's. Her lips,

which now discourse the slang of the studio or of the streets, will utter poetic phrases. She may attain to the wit of Rosalind, the tenderness of Imogen, the gentle austerity of Isabella. She is at least on the right way. She sees the Promised Land on the edge of the desert. The flowery meadows of the Age of Gold, which always open to the purview of every great literary epoch, are in sight. We have said that the new Magazine Girl does not work, and we must explain this apparent blasphemy against current ideas. Every sane human being wants to exercise his or her muscles and mind,—wants to produce something, the labour of hands or brain, to justify existence. Health and sanity are only retainable on those terms. But there is a vast difference between voluntary labour, however extreme,—labour done with pleasure and delight,—and uncongenial work done at the command of a superior or at the bidding of necessity. Modern industrialism, we should say, is responsible for modern realism in literature. By its dreary uniformity and monotony it stunts body and soul alike, and makes its victims unfit either to serve as models for great art or to enjoy the art when done. What is it that irresistibly attracts the soul of mankind to warfare? Is it not its freedom and variety of action, its culminating excitement of battle? War is an intoxication, a play, for which men are willing to lose their lives. Imaginative literature is a less brutal form of intoxication, a less dangerous kind of play. And as anything is praiseworthy which brings back this

primal, central conception of literature, we think the Magazine Girl deserves credit.

If play is the main purpose of imaginative literature, we are for the rigour of the game. The world is always loth to believe that there is any distinction between life and literature,—that there is an unspanned gap between the two. Like children, it demands of every story, "Is this true?" Literature is the profoundest kind of truth; but it is far enough from being fact. Take the mere mechanical aspect of the case. Here you have an oblong volume wherein some hundreds of thousands of black marks on white paper are supposed to represent the solid earth and the superincumbent sky and the procession of life between them. Nay, this book which can be read in a few hours pretends to give the life history of some score or two of human beings, from their cradles to their graves. Obviously we are a far way from reality,—much further off than in painting or sculpture, which do give some palpable simulacrum of existence. The piece of literature exists only in the idea of the person who creates it, and in the minds of the people who read it.

There are three main methods by which literary creations may be effected. The first is the method of pure idealism. A richly endowed mind may draw from the cave of his own being the figures and scenes of a phantasmal world. He may deck and adorn it with the treasures of his own feelings and fancies, and spread over it a light that never was on sea or land. Some

promptings from without he must have: he takes the names of visible persons and things, but he fills them out from his own stock of imaginations. Perhaps it is from some state of preëxistence that he acquires a notion of real existence. Or perhaps it is the pollen from the poets of the past which impregnates and makes fruitful the buds and blossoms latent in his own mind. It is needless to say that in the hands of men entirely great this method is capable of tremendous successes. All poets follow it to a greater or less extent. Probably the best half of the greatest creations of literature are of this dream substance. It is doubtful whether human nature ever quite equals, either in good or evil, the supreme figures of fiction and poetry. Schiller and Shelley are the modern types of creators who have little hold on real life. "Does this remind you of Hellas?" said Trelawney to Shelley when they were viewing some Italian town. "No, but it does of Hell," answered the poet. He was indignant that life should disturb and belie his dream. The weakness of the idealistic method is that it becomes too wire-spun,—it becomes a convention. It needs every now and then to be subjected to the rude shock of reality; its ærial visions need to be reborn out of earth, as the clouds are reborn out of the sea.

The second method is that of realism or naturalism. An author sets himself to study a certain part or section of the life about him. He vivisects, dissects, analyses, and photographs. He sets his models in a glass case and studies them from every

point of view. He becomes a prodigy of notes, a marvel of memoranda. But in the first place, any man's life is too short to exhaust all the possibilities of any piece of existence, and the patience of readers would balk at any true, full record. In the second place, perspective and relation are lost, and what was intended to be extra true becomes absurdly false. In the third place, the volatile and essential spirit of life, which is the only thing really worth while in literature, flies such close, minute investigation. The thing was vital, and now it is a *caput mortuum*. Nevertheless, in all times the absolute facing of facts and the sincere attempt to record them has resulted in great literature. Aristophanes and Euripides, in part Juvenal and Petronius, Rabelais and the authors of the Beast Fabliaux and Satires of the Middle Ages, Chaucer and Swift and Burns, are masters of the real and natural. But perhaps realism has been best realized by the great idealists,—by Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe.

The third creative method is that of abstraction. It is really a combination of the other two, neither of them being pushed to excess. An author views the world, as it were, by glimpses and glances. He takes enough from it to fill out his preconceived idea. He concentrates and condenses the things and persons of the world, and breathes his own breath into his creations. He builds up figures out of many models, or from a mere suggestion provided by one. He gives us the impression of

true life while we know very well that no such life ever existed. If the originals of Hamlet or Falstaff or Rosalind, Mr. Shandy or My Uncle Toby, the Master of Ravenswood or Captain Dalgerty, Micawber, Pecksniff, or Mrs. Gamp, could be confronted with their literary doubles, we should see how immeasurably distant and different the two sets of personages were,—how much has been left out of the real and how much has been put into the imaginary beings. Everything seems to be there, but everything has suffered a sea-change. What is intolerable in life, because of wickedness, foulness, or dulness, becomes not only tolerable but delightful in literature. Folly has the effect of wit, and weakness of power. To give us this brief abstraction and transformation of life is the greatest work of genius.

But we must return to our theme and make an application of our discourse. Literature in America began with pure idealism. Poe, Emerson, Hawthorne, Bryant, Cooper, and nearly all our first great flight of writers, built from the idea—whether innate in their own natures or derived from Europe. Then came the men of fact, the students of contemporary life. They came in their multitude, men and women, and drove the idealists, thinkers, poets, from the field. We are now far enough from them partially to adjudge their product, and it certainly bears no comparison with the first vintage of our wits. Just at present a new sap seems to be rising in our midst. There seems to be the promise of a spring, and that is

why we pitch upon the Magazine Girl as a symbol of hope. She has a touch of poetry and idealism in her, and is, we hope, the prelude to a rich harvest of the wine of literature.

THE END



Vanishing Roads

And Other Essays

By

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

Author of "The Quest of the Golden Girl," etc.

12°. 387 pages. \$1.50 net

There are essays vital to the lover of nature, and essays of assured appeal to the student of manners and of men. An indication of the character and scope of the book is afforded by the list of the contents appended:

Vanishing Roads, Woman as a Supernatural Being, The Lack of Imagination among Millionaires, Modern Aids to Romance, The Last Call, The Passing of Mrs. Grundy, The Persecutions of Beauty, The Many Faces, The Snows of Yester-Year, The Psychology of Gossip, The Spirit of the Open, An Old American Tow-path, A Modern Saint Francis, A Little Ghost in the Garden, On Re-reading Walter Pater, The Mystery of Fiona MacLeod, Forbes-Robertson—An Appreciation, Imperishable Fiction, The Man Behind the Pen.

New York

G. P. Putnam's Sons

London

Where No Fear Was

By
Arthur Christopher Benson

Author of "From a College Window," "The Upton
Letters," etc.

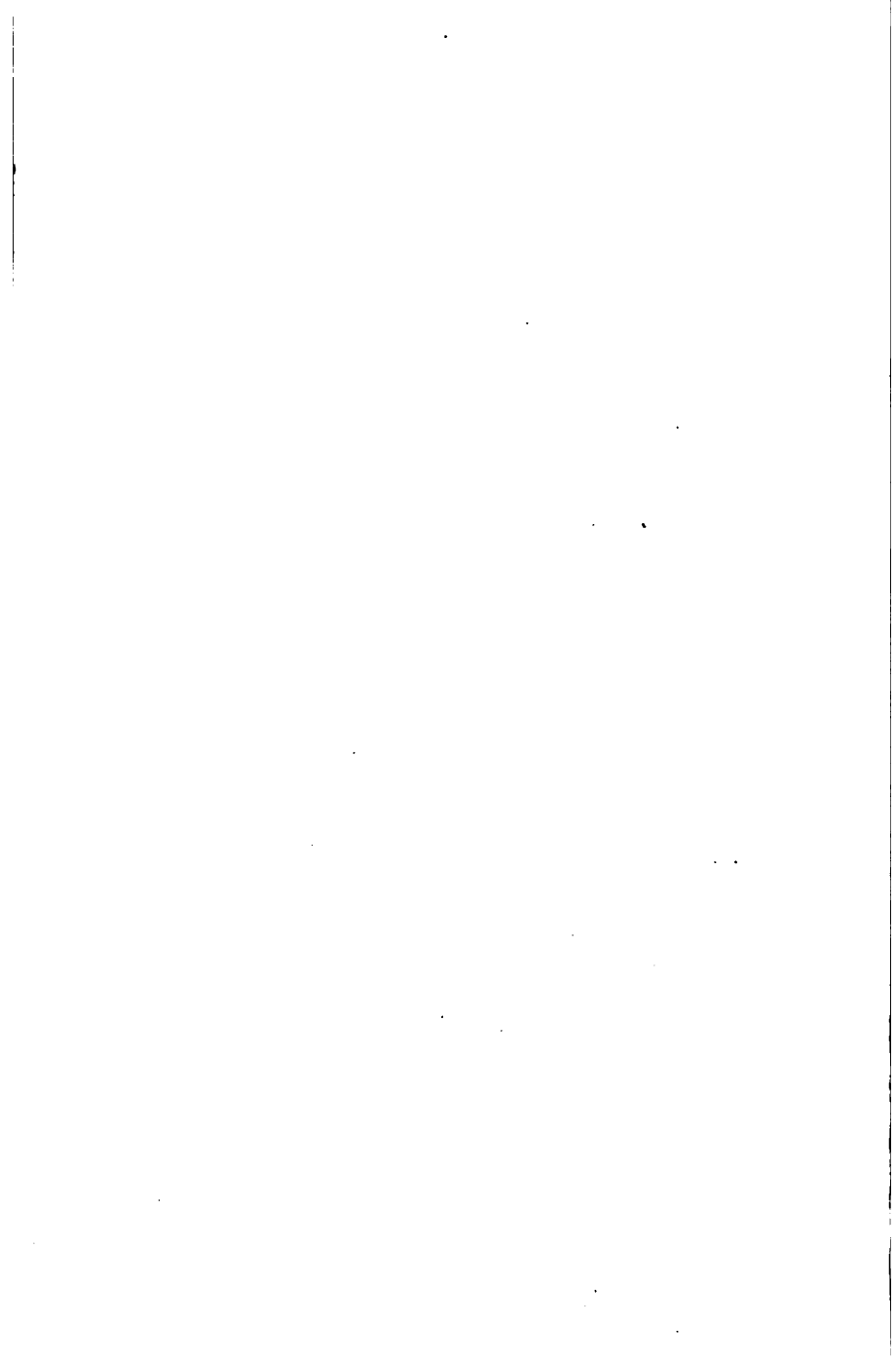
12°. \$1.50 net

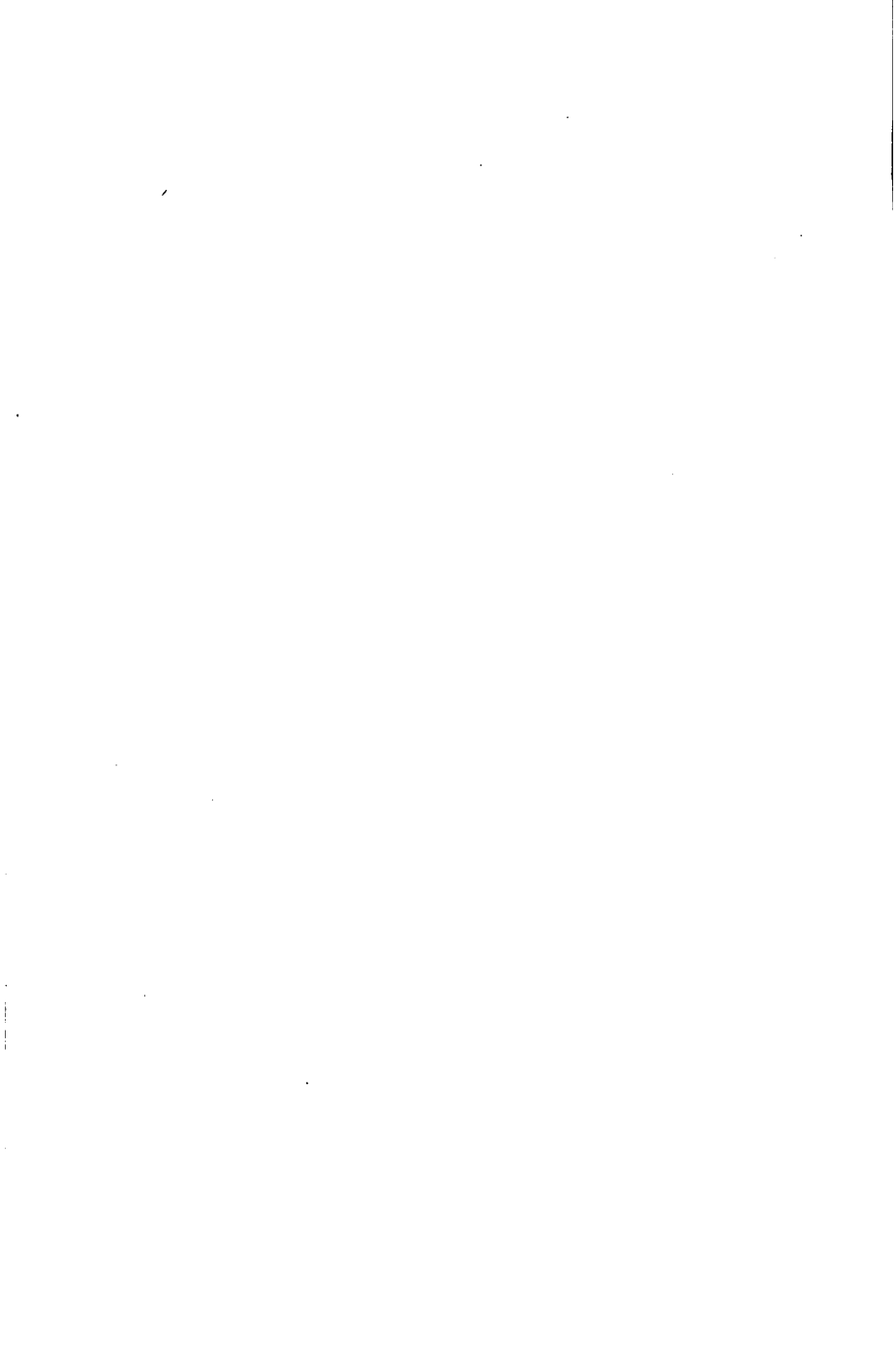
In Mr. Benson's new book he turns for the reader many of the rich pages of his life. Yet the book is only incidentally autobiographical, the author drawing abundantly as well upon the great common hoard of experience for the portrayal and valuation of those fears, many of them tonic in their effect, which in a variety of forms goad man from infancy to old age. Fear, in the expansive sense in which Mr. Benson uses the term, is traced as an influence whether for good or for ill in the lives of Dr. Johnson, Tennyson, Ruskin, Carlyle, John Sterling, and Charlotte Brontë.

G. P. Putnam's Sons

New York

London







150 ref

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C054926120

343571

Moore

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY



